

F1 DRAMA Title fight gets dirty with one race to go

AUTOSPORT

BRITAIN'S BEST MOTORSPORT WEEKLY

9 DECEMBER 2021

Race of disgrace sets up historic title showdown

TITLE BATTLE

369.5
VS
369.5

They're level
on points for
Abu Dhabi finale

Max penalised as Lewis wins chaotic Saudi GP



‘I’m just trying to race’

MAX VERSTAPPEN

‘He’s over the limit’

LEWIS HAMILTON

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A dramatic race that sets up a showdown, but F1 can do better

Some commentators used phrases such as “the best race in years” to describe last weekend’s Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. Autosport presumably exists in a parallel universe to those people and, by the look of our inbox, we’re not alone.

Yes, the race was dramatic — you certainly couldn’t call it boring. But a race with that many red flags, safety cars and VSCs, plus some dubious driving from one of the best drivers in the world, falls a long way short of the finest grand prix of the season.

Alex Kalinauckas explains how a GP that polarised opinion (how did Verstappen win driver of the day?!) unfolded, both on-track and behind the scenes, in our in-depth report (page 18). He also takes a closer look at Verstappen’s driving and how we have got to this point, while Luke Smith investigates how suitable the new Jeddah track is for F1, given the Monza-level lap speeds on a street-style circuit with blind corners (p16).

All that aside, the result did give us what we wanted — and what this fascinating, rollercoaster season deserved: a title decider in the finale. What we need now is a *clean* race that really does show F1 in the best light and can be described as one of the greatest in championship history. So come on Max, Lewis, Red Bull and Mercedes. Let’s have a fair finale, one that provides a worthy champion. We don’t want a 1990 Suzuka or 1997 Jerez, even if the Netflix-style narrative demands it.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
16 DECEMBER**

Abu Dhabi GP and Top 50
Our take on the F1 title decider and the best drivers of 2021



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Andy Hone/Motorsport Images

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Verstappen heads off track in one of several battles with Hamilton in Saudi Arabia



HONEY

TENSIONS REACH BREAKING POINT FOR TITLE DECIDER

FORMULA 1

Last Sunday's turbulent Saudi Arabian Grand Prix has stoked tensions between Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton ahead of their winner-takes-all title showdown this weekend in Abu Dhabi.

Hamilton scored his third win in a row in Jeddah to draw level on points with Verstappen after a fraught race in which the duo got caught up in a number of incidents.

Following the first red flag, Red Bull driver Verstappen went off-track and pushed the Mercedes of Hamilton wide at the restart. During the second stoppage, he was told to give up a place to Hamilton on the grid for the next restart.

Verstappen landed in hot water once more for his moves against Hamilton later in the race. He picked up a five-second time penalty for running off-track at Turn 1 and gaining an advantage, and a post-race 10s penalty for causing a collision with Hamilton when trying to give up a place at Turn 27.

Hamilton called Verstappen "f**king crazy" over the radio during the race when trying to pass at Turn 1. He said afterwards that Verstappen was "over the limit",

and that his rival was not adhering to overtaking etiquette.

"I think we're seeing multiple incidents this year where, even with Brazil [scene of a controversial incident between the two], we're supposed to do our racing on track in between the white lines," said Hamilton. "The rules haven't been clear from the stewards, those things have been allowed, so that's continued. From my understanding, I know that I can't overtake someone and go off track and then keep the position. I think that's well known between all us drivers. But it doesn't apply to one of us, I guess."

Verstappen claimed that he was "just trying to race" with his aggressive moves, adding: "This sport these days is more about penalties than about racing. For me, this is not Formula 1, but at least the fans enjoyed it."

Red Bull felt aggrieved over a number of incidents. Team advisor Helmut Marko told Autosport post-race that Red Bull is "not treated the same" as Mercedes by the stewards, taking issue with Hamilton's slow formation lap ahead of the first red-flag restart, when he left a big gap to Verstappen ahead.

Team principal Christian Horner

added that it felt like there were "too many rules", and that F1 missed the experience of the late race director Charlie Whiting, who died on the eve of the 2019 season.

"It felt like today the sport missed Charlie Whiting," said Horner. "I'm sorry to say, but the experience that he had... It's obviously frustrating but it's difficult for Michael [Masi] and the stewards, particularly at this type of venue, type of circuit, with the amount of debris and types of corner there are. But it's the same for everybody."

Mercedes F1 chief Toto Wolff shied away from judging Verstappen's moves too harshly after the race, saying he wanted to watch the incidents again with "calmness". But he did believe the moves were like "Brazil reloaded", feeling the lack of action over Verstappen's Turn 4 defence against Hamilton at Interlagos had set a precedent.

Wolff hoped the events of Jeddah would ensure that the title fight in Abu Dhabi is not settled in controversial fashion or with an on-track incident. Should both Verstappen and Hamilton fail to score at Yas Marina, Verstappen would be crowned world champion as he has one more win this season.



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IMAGES

DETAILS OF SIX 2022 SPRINTS SLIP OUT

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 has proposed the six venues where it wants to host sprint races in 2022 as formal discussions begin with teams about next year's format.

During a meeting last Saturday at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix, team principals were briefed on plans for sprint races next year. There were three Saturday events in 2021, and F1 bosses have been clear in their push to expand that.

Although plans remain formative and no vote took place, sources indicated that sprint races are planned at Sakhir, Imola, Montreal, the Red Bull Ring, Zandvoort and Interlagos in 2022.



MAUGER

A potential change for next year being discussed is the awarding of points to the top 10 finishers in the sprint, rather than just the top three as was the case this season, and whether to make sprints standalone events that do not set the grid for Sunday's race. Teams are also yet to agree on financial changes for next year and

how they would fit in with the cost cap.

F1 is also eager to get the FIA to change the rules so that, on sprint weekends, the official pole position will go to the driver who is fastest in Friday's qualifying session rather than the sprint winner, after criticism from drivers and fans.

JONATHAN NOBLE



"I would hope that today's race has enough repercussions that everyone is going to learn from it, and adapt for the final race in Abu Dhabi," said Wolff. "I think that similar driving, if it were to be deemed by the stewards as over the line, would then probably also be penalised in Abu Dhabi, and that could well end in a messy situation for everybody. I don't think that the championship has deserved a result which was influenced by a collision."

Regardless of the title outcome, Verstappen has a chance of another gong after being nominated for the BBC Sports Personality of the Year's World Sports Star award for overseas athletes. The award was last won by an F1 driver in 2013, when Sebastian Vettel was honoured.

Hamilton won last year's overall SPOTY award for British sporting figures, but won't find out until just before the event if he has been nominated again.

LUKE SMITH



ETHERINGTON

Merc 'Grenfell' deal criticised

FORMULA 1

Mercedes Formula 1 boss Toto Wolff has hinted that his team could re-evaluate its sponsorship deal with insulation firm Kingspan, following outcry over its role in the Grenfell Tower disaster of 2017.

Kingspan's insulation was one of the products used on the outside of the tower, where 72 people were killed and which is the subject of a public enquiry.

The pressure group Grenfell United, made up of survivors and bereaved family members, wrote to Wolff to express their disgust at the Kingspan deal. In his response, Wolff (above) said he would be willing to meet them to better understand the situation.

UK government minister Michael Gove then weighed into the matter in an open letter to Wolff posted on Twitter, urging him to reconsider the deal and warning that the government could change advertising rules for motorsport, such as its anger at the situation.

World champion Lewis Hamilton made it clear that he had had no prior knowledge of the deal being done.

"We have discussed also that with the important people, and we will reach out to Kingspan and come up with the right solution," said Wolff. "There is a contractual agreement that's behind these things, and we want to just do the right thing with integrity."

JONATHAN NOBLE

Mercedes on top as new season looms

FORMULA E

Formula E pre-season testing at Valencia comes with a competitive caveat in so far as the permanent, flowing Circuit Ricardo Tormo carries little resemblance to the tight and bumpy street tracks that typically pepper the championship calendar. But, even if the venue is not the clearest barometer, Mercedes and its engine customer team Venturi Racing certainly looked imperious over three days of running last week.

As the factory Silver Arrow entry prepares for its final season in the series, it appears well placed to collect another title double. Perhaps that should come as no surprise given cost-saving homologation rules brought in response to the pandemic ensure that the powertrains of last season are carried over. But where there is technical stability and subsequent reliability, trials of the new-for-2022 race and qualifying format changes provided plenty of intrigue.

The winter runout in Spain allowed Dan Ticktum, Antonio Giovinazzi and Oliver Askew to make their unofficial debuts, and engineers finally saw their off-season software work in action as they got to grips with the 20kW power hike (now up to 220kW in race trim) for the final season of the Gen2 car.

Edoardo Mortara emerged on top in most respects. With Jerome D'Ambrosio now at the helm of the Venturi squad, Mortara used his Merc powertrain to post the overall fastest time of the test, 0.041 seconds clear of two-time champion Jean-Eric Vergne. The



Mercedes of de Vries leads a gaggle during Valencia practice race

Swiss-Italian, who finished runner-up to Nyck de Vries last season, also progressed from 10th to third in the faux race and effectively 'won' the simulation qualifying head-to-heads.

The first real-world run out of the new qualifying format – which breaks down the 22-car grid into two groups of 11 (one driver from each team), before the fastest four from each progress into quarter-finals, semis and a two-way dogfight for pole – arrived on the opening day. Although it was the Envision Racing Audi of Robin Frijns that was quickest on Monday, and Mitch Evans's Jaguar set the best lap in the qualifying run, it was Mortara who would have lined up on pole. In the last of the two-car sprints to decide the order of the front row, he beat new team-mate Lucas di Grassi.

Tweaks are already in the pipeline, with teams feeling that the initial 10-minute group sessions left little time to spare after an out-lap, prep lap and a final flier. The qualifying timetable also caught out Giovinazzi and his Dragon Penske Autosport squad. The outgoing Alfa Romeo Formula 1 driver missed his head-to-head slot with Ticktum after

his car was called to the FIA weighbridge. Further curiosity was provided by the American squad thanks to a diet line-up of engineers, and it only ran one car on Thursday when it failed to replace Giovinazzi, who was travelling to Jeddah.

In the simulation race, Mercedes delivered a 1-2-3-4. Artificial full-course yellows, analogous to a virtual safety car, were deployed to beta test the new added-time concept. To avoid a repeat of the farce at Valencia last season, in-race energy reductions have been replaced by added time. So, for every minute of FCY or a safety car, 45s will be added onto the 45-minutes-plus-one-lap format. The running culminated with de Vries leading Mercedes team-mate Stoffel Vandoorne for an easy 1-2, with Mortara and di Grassi next over the line.

Vandoorne was somewhat fortunate to make it into Turn 1. The two Jaguars of Evans and Sam Bird directly ahead failed to get away when their systems tripped on the launch – a legacy of the strict parameters used for private testing at Abingdon Airfield having not been removed from the coding.

MATT KEW



It's the new boys! F1 refugee Giovinazzi heads F2 race winner Ticktum

TOP 10 VALENCIA TIMES

POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	Edoardo Mortara (Venturi)	1m25.763s
2	Jean-Eric Vergne (DS Techeetah)	1m25.804s
3	Stoffel Vandoorne (Mercedes)	1m25.861s
4	Mitch Evans (Jaguar)	1m25.884s
5	Pascal Wehrlein (Porsche)	1m25.895s
6	Nyck de Vries (Mercedes)	1m25.901s
7	Nick Cassidy (Envision)	1m25.913s
8	Robin Frijns (Envision)	1m25.918s
9	Antonio Felix da Costa (DS Te'tah)	1m26.061s
10	Jake Dennis (Andretti)	1m26.100s



FORMULA 1 Damon Hill, Martin Brundle and Dario Franchitti were among the luminaries to demonstrate a Williams FW07, the first of the team's models to win a race, at last weekend's Saudi Arabian GP. Tributes were paid to team founder Sir Frank Williams, who died the previous weekend. Before the race there was a minute's tribute to honour Williams, followed by applause to recognise his legacy to the sport. **Photograph by Galloway/Motorsport Images**

Motorsport UK throws weight behind Sulayem bid

FIA

FIA presidential candidate Mohammed ben Sulayem has received the backing of British governing body Motorsport UK.

Sulayem (right) is going up against Graham Stoker in the 17 December battle to become successor to outgoing FIA president Jean Todt. Neither candidate has emerged as a clear frontrunner so far.

Last Friday, Sulayem's campaign was officially endorsed by MSUK and the RAC (a founding member of the FIA), a move that could be influential in encouraging

other organisations to get behind Sulayem.

"We feel that the team for Mohammed, they haven't got all the answers and they'd be the first to accept that, but they do accept the need for change," explained MSUK chairman David Richards (below left). "We feel that in these turbulent times and what's going on ahead of us, that's what's required. We can't just sort of accept: 'just trust us. It'll be business as usual and it will all be fine.' I honestly don't think this is right in this day and age. So our vote is going to go to Mohammed ben Sulayem."

Both Sulayem and Stoker were invited to present their visions for the future in a video conference with the board members of MSUK and the RAC, prior to their answers being made available to all club members. But Richards said that Stoker's team decided against a release of their video.

"[It] is somewhat confusing, and a big surprise to receive that," said Richards. "On our website, you will see the Mohammed ben Sulayem team, their video is shown in its entirety. So it left our boards and our members in somewhat confusion, I think, about the state we're in at the moment. And



it certainly doesn't sit well with us that we can't share this information with people."

Stoker has been backed by other well-known figures. MSUK council member and British Touring Car Championship boss Alan Gow said: "I've known and worked closely with Graham since 1995 and have seen first-hand his devotion to helping develop motorsport. Graham always puts the sport first, has the grass roots and member clubs at heart and is entirely committed to making the sport more inclusive."

JONATHAN NOBLE





WEC

Kamui Kobayashi has been given a new – and additional – role at the Toyota World Endurance Championship squad. The two-time WEC title winner will be team principal at the same time as bidding for a hat-trick of titles together with Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez.

The new position at Toyota Gazoo Racing for 35-year-old Kobayashi was the surprise news when Toyota took the wraps off its 2022 motorsport programme on Monday. It came at the same time as confirmation of Kazuki Nakajima's retirement and move into a managerial role, as well as his replacement in the #8 Toyota GR010 HYBRID by Ryo Hirakawa.

Kobayashi will be much more than a figurehead. He is a direct replacement for Hisatake Murata, the former TGR team president who moved to a new job within the Toyota empire in October. That means that TGR technical director Pascal Vasselton and team director Rob Leupen will report to the Japanese sportscar stalwart.

The logic behind promoting an active driver, who will also be racing in Super Formula in Japan next year with KCMG, to be head of the team remains unclear. The move appears to have been driven by Toyota CEO Akio Toyoda's belief that the drivers should be at the centre of the company's motorsport programmes.

Toyota's statement announcing the reshuffle of the TGR management structure

explained that Kobayashi will "enhance the organisation and optimise its driver-focused approach to WEC".

Nakajima outlined a desire to continue racing in Japan when it was announced in November that he wouldn't be part of the WEC line-up in 2022, but a potential Super Formula seat at TOM'S, where he has been a mainstay of the line-up since 2011, has gone to Giuliano Alesi (see below).

The managerial role hinted at back then will be the vice-chairmanship of TGR Europe, the Cologne-based organisation that develops and runs Toyota's WEC prototypes. His job will encompass all projects undertaken in Germany, whereas Kobayashi's will be specific to the WEC.

GARY WATKINS

Alesi claims top-level TOM'S rides for Japan

SUPER FORMULA/GT

Giuliano Alesi has been handed a promotion to the TOM'S Toyota Super GT team for 2022, and will also drive for the squad full-time in Super Formula in place of the retiring Kazuki Nakajima.

The son of ex-Formula 1 star Jean steps up to Japan's two senior categories after a season spent mostly in Super Formula Lights and Super GT's GT300 class.

He also replaced Nakajima for five of this year's seven SF races at TOM'S, where he took a shock victory.

In Super GT, Alesi hops into the #36 GR Supra alongside newly crowned champion Sho Tsuboi. Veteran Yuhi Sekiguchi, who won the title last month alongside Tsuboi, will move to the SARD Toyota team in the seat vacated by Heikki Kovalainen, who announced last month that he will not

continue in Japan next year.

Alesi's new SF team-mate Ritomo Miyata replaces Ryo Hirakawa (see above) as Sacha Fenestraz's partner in the #37 TOM'S Toyota after two seasons with Racing Project Bandoh. Taking over Miyata's seat at Bandoh is Sena Sakaguchi, who gets his first full-time GT500 drive after filling in for an absent Fenestraz at TOM'S for five races this season.

JAMIE KLEIN



IN THE HEADLINES

PIASTRI GETS ALPINE TEST

Increasingly likely Formula 2 champion Oscar Piastri will take part in next Tuesday's Formula 1 rookie test at Yas Marina with Alpine as he prepares for a year on the sidelines as the team's reserve. Other drivers known to be driving at the Abu Dhabi track are Guanyu Zhou (Alfa Romeo), Nyck de Vries (Mercedes), Juri Vips (Red Bull), Liam Lawson (AlphaTauri), Pato O'Ward (McLaren), Antonio Fuoco (Ferrari), Nick Yelloly (Aston Martin) and Robert Shwartzman (Haas). Williams is understood to be hoping to give Logan Sargeant a run.

SMEETS JOINS WILLIAMS

Former Volkswagen Motorsport chief Sven Smeets has joined the Williams F1 team as sporting director. Smeets is the latest among an increasing ex-VW influence at the team. He was team manager of the marque's World Rally effort under Jost Capito, who is now Williams's CEO, while technical director FX Demaison is also ex-VW.

PORSCHE FOR FULL DTM...

Porsche will join the DTM full-time next season, with leading ADAC GT Masters team SSR Performance entering two 911 GT3-Rs. It follows a toe-in-the-water from SSR at this year's Nurburgring round, where Michael Ammermuller qualified on the second row. No drivers have been confirmed for the team that ran Ammermuller and Mathieu Jaminet to the GT Masters runner-up spot this year, and Ammermuller and Christian Engelhart to the 2020 title.

...AS RED BULL SOFTENS

Meanwhile, Red Bull is now expected to remain in the DTM after all next season with AF Corse and Ferrari after their bitter final-round title defeat at the Norisring with Liam Lawson. Series chief Gerhard Berger is understood to have held talks with Red Bull boss Dietrich Mateschitz and Ferrari president John Elkann to ensure their continued participation.



Teams expand as grid maxes out

BTCC

The British Touring Car Championship will feature a maximum-capacity 32-car grid in 2022, up from 29.

Alan Gow, the chief of BTCC organiser TOCA, has held back two TBL entrants' licences in recent years, and also retained the TBL of Simpson Racing when that squad withdrew at the end of the 2019 season. Gow's reason for this was that he wanted to slim the field down rather than find replacements for teams that fell by the wayside.

But owing to demand, the BTCC teams agreed with TOCA that the three discretionary TBLs could be loaned for one season, and one each has been awarded to official Toyota team Speedworks Motorsport plus Honda squads Team Dynamics and BTC Racing.

Speedworks therefore expands to three cars just one season after it grew to two, and Autosport understands that its 2021 race winner Rory Butcher is looking a safe bet to remain on board. Dynamics increases to three Civic Type Rs 12 months on from its request to do the same for 2021 being vetoed by a vote among the teams. Current Jack Sears Trophy champion

Dan Rowbottom is on a two-year deal that rolls into 2022, while team boss Matt Neal admitted "there's a good possibility" that three-time champion Gordon Shedden will stay on too. When asked whether the third driver could be triple title winner Neal himself, he replied: "You never know."

Neal could confirm that his squad is building up two brand-new Civics for its own use – which it planned to do anyway – and that one of the existing cars will be converted to the new-for-2022 hybrid regulations, plus there is a car in build for BTC's expansion to four Hondas. Sources suggest that Josh Cook, third in the 2021 standings, should stay on here.

Elsewhere, Excelr8 Motorsport has acquired the pair of Trade Price Cars TBLs under which it ran two of its Hyundais in 2021, while the BMR TBL under which Ash Sutton won this year's title in a Laser Tools Racing Infiniti Q50 has gone to LTR boss Bob Moffat's son Aiden's company.

"The demand for the BTCC has never been greater," said Gow. Clearly, this also means I've failed to achieve my long-stated aim of reducing the grid size. Whilst that remains the goal going forward, admittedly it's a nice problem to have..."

MARCUS SIMMONS

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Aitken in frame for IndyCar seat after Sebring runout

INDYCAR

Williams Formula 1 protege Jack Aitken is in contention for a part-time ride with the Ed Carpenter Racing IndyCar team following a test this week at Sebring.

Although 2012 champion and 2014 Indy 500 winner Ryan Hunter-Reay remains an option for team owner Ed Carpenter, who drives the #20 entry in the oval races, he no longer feels obliged to hire an American driver following the US Air Force's decision to quit sponsorship in IndyCar.

One-time grand prix starter Aitken, who finished fifth in the 2019 Formula 2 championship, has spent this season racing in GT World Challenge Europe, where he sustained injuries in a heavy Spa 24 Hours crash. He has also spent a second year as Williams's test and reserve driver, and will take part in FP1 at this weekend's Abu Dhabi GP. He tested for ECR at Sebring on Monday alongside fellow Briton Callum Iott (confirmed at Juncos Hollinger Racing

in 2022), Nyck de Vries (Meyer Shank Racing) and Stoffel Vandoorne (Arrow McLaren SP).

Aitken (below) completed 114 laps at Sebring, finishing the day 0.884 seconds off the pacesetter de Vries.

Carpenter told Autosport: "I think it was a productive day for us and for Jack. I don't fully know what he's thinking of for next year, I need to discuss it with him further, but I definitely think he was enjoying our car, and the challenge of IndyCar."

"They were all quality guys testing today but for sure Jack did a nice job. He's talented and professional. So we'll need to look at him for next year, talk to him a bit more. But there are others – some of whom have been reported, some who have not."

Carpenter hopes to have a deal sealed "by Christmas".

AMSP team president Taylor Kiel confirmed to Autosport that Vandoorne, too, is a contender to be a part-timer in IndyCar next season, as the squad, which will again run Pato O'Ward and Felix Rosenqvist full-time in 2022, prepares to field three full-time cars the following year.

Kiel remarked: "Stoffel's in the conversation, no doubt. He did a great job for us today. It's a two-way street – he's got to go away and digest what IndyCar is, and what our team is, and if he decides it's something he'd like to do. Then we'll have a conversation at that point."

Meanwhile, Dale Coyne Racing was due to confirm today (Thursday) that two-time Indy 500 winner Takuma Sato will join the team alongside Indy Lights runner-up David Malukas.

DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ

Rossi says his future is in GTs

GULF 12 HOURS/IMSA

Motorcycle racing legend Valentino Rossi will continue his career on four wheels in 2022 after his retirement from MotoGP at the end of this season. The seven-time MotoGP champion is promising that he will undertake a full programme of car racing next year.

The 42-year-old Italian will kick off a full-time switch to sportscar racing with another assault on the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi early next month. But he's dropped some heavy hints that that his third outing in the Middle East endurance will be followed by appearances in the GT Daytona ranks of the IMSA SportsCar Championship, possibly starting as early as next month's Daytona 24 Hours.

"From next year I will race GT cars in endurance races and championships; at the moment it is not decided [in which series] yet," he said in an interview on IMSA's Twitter feed. "There is a very interesting championship in the US called IMSA."

Rossi will take part in the two six-hour events that make up the Gulf 12 Hours on 8 January aboard a Kessel Racing Ferrari 488 GT3 Evo. His team-mates will be Luca Marini (his half-brother and also a MotoGP rider) and Alessio Salucci, with whom he finished third and fourth overall in his two previous attempts on the race in 2019 and this year (below), when the race temporarily moved to Bahrain as a result of the COVID pandemic.

Rossi's four-wheel racing experience includes competing in two rounds of the 2012 Blancpain Endurance Series (now the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup) aboard a Kessel Racing Ferrari 458 Italia GT3. He also tested Ferrari Formula 1 cars in 2004, 2006 and 2009.

GARY WATKINS





SUPER GT Here's Nissan's new Super GT contender, to replace the GT-R that has been in service since 2008. The Nissan Z is the race version of the road model launched in August, and which the marque hopes will turn around its fortunes. NISMO pair Ronnie Quintarelli and Tsugio Matsuda were its last champions in 2015, and are expected to stay on, while Bertrand Baguette is tipped to be incoming from Honda in a swap with Nobuharu Matsushita alongside Kazuki Hiramane at the Team Impul squad of the legendary Kazuyoshi Hoshino. **Image by Nissan**

IN THE HEADLINES

RTN FROM WEC TO IMSA

Racing Team Nederland is switching to the IMSA ranks for next season after winning the LMP2 Pro-Am title this year in the World Endurance Championship. The team will take its TDS-run ORECA to North America for an attack on the four long-distance races that make up the Endurance Cup segment of the IMSA SportsCar Championship. Team boss Frits van Eerd and Giedo van der Garde will be joined for all four races by IMSA LMP3 racer Dylan Murry and, for the Daytona 24 Hours next month, by IndyCar race winner Rinus VeeKay.

CAMERON'S TASMAN TITLE

Aaron Cameron claimed the two-round Tasman Series title for \$5000 cars after the quadruple-header finale supporting last weekend's Bathurst 1000. Cameron took two thirds as his best results at Mount Panorama to beat ex-F1 driver Roberto Merhi into the runner-up spot. The event was plagued with crashes, including one for Cameron in the final race, which meant just 13 laps of green-flag action were completed across the four races. James Golding took three wins, and veteran Tim Macrow the other.

MIES WINS IN AUSTRALIA

Merhi also took part in the two GT World Challenge Australia races at Bathurst, scoring a best of fifth in the Audi R8 LMS he shared with Mark Rosser. Audi works driver Christopher Mies, meanwhile, escaped from COVID quarantine to take a victory with newly crowned champion Yasser Shahin. Mies also took an Audi RS3 to a best of fourth in the TCR Australia races, after team-mate Chaz Mostert had wrapped up the crown in race one.

HUGHES BACK IN F2 AGAIN

Jake Hughes will rejoin the F2 grid for this weekend's Abu Dhabi finale. He will drive for HWA Racelab on its series swansong in place of Logan Sargeant, who competed at Jeddah.

Barnicoat switches to US Lexus

IMSA

Briton Ben Barnicoat has left McLaren's factory GT roster for pastures new in North America. The 24-year-old is joining Lexus for an assault on the new GT Daytona Pro class of the IMSA SportsCar Championship.

Barnicoat will drive a Lexus RC F GT3 for the Vasser Sullivan squad in the replacement for the GT Le Mans division. He will link up with fellow Brit Jack Hawksworth, who has been part of the Lexus set-up since 2017, for the complete season, while IndyCar driver Kyle Kirkwood will join them for the four enduros.

Barnicoat met the bosses of the American team, including former Indycar champion Jimmy Vasser, when he contested last month's Petit Le Mans IMSA finale at Road Atlanta at the wheel of a McLaren 720S GT3 run by Optimum Motorsport. "After

meeting Jimmy and 'Sulli' [James Sullivan] for the first time and seeing the team in action, it's clear to me that they are the team to be with in IMSA right now," he said. "The level of professionalism, along with the dedication and hunger to win, was incredible, and I can't ask for any more than that as a driver."

Barnicoat revealed his departure from the McLaren family in the days ahead of Monday's Lexus announcement. He was formerly part of the Formula 1 young driver programme, then joined its GT academy in 2017 before gaining a factory deal for 2018.

Former GP3 frontrunner Marvin Kirchhofer, whose sportscar credits include a win in the Blancpain GT Series Sprint Cup and second at the Bathurst 12 Hour in 2019, was announced as a new McLaren factory driver on Barnicoat's departure.

GARY WATKINS

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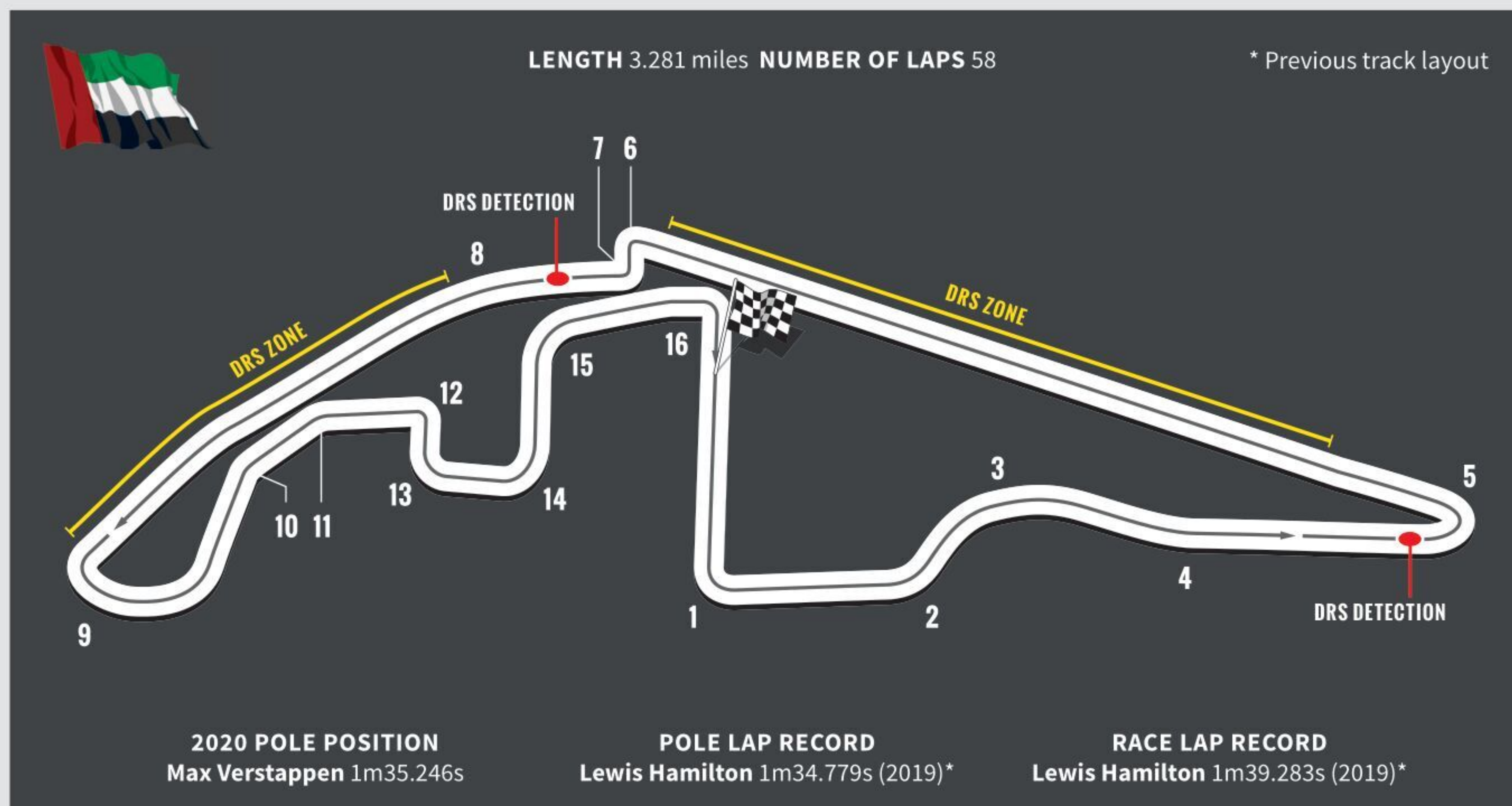
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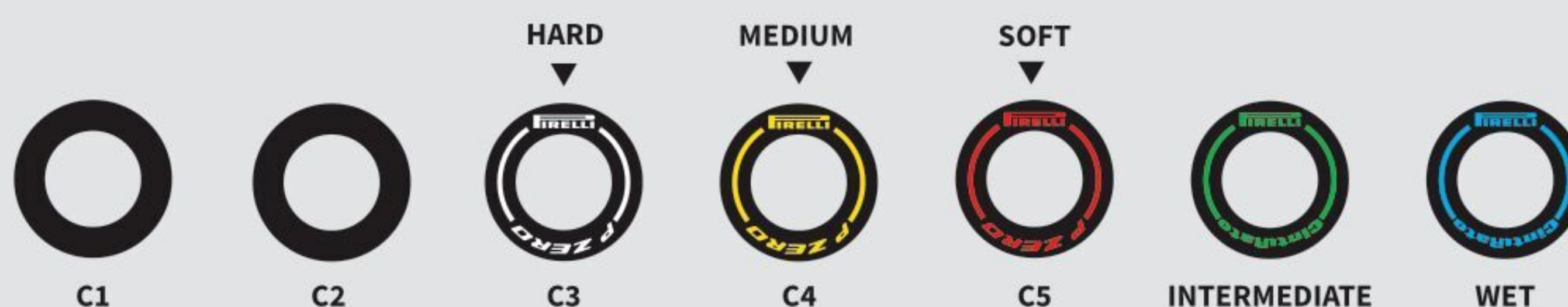
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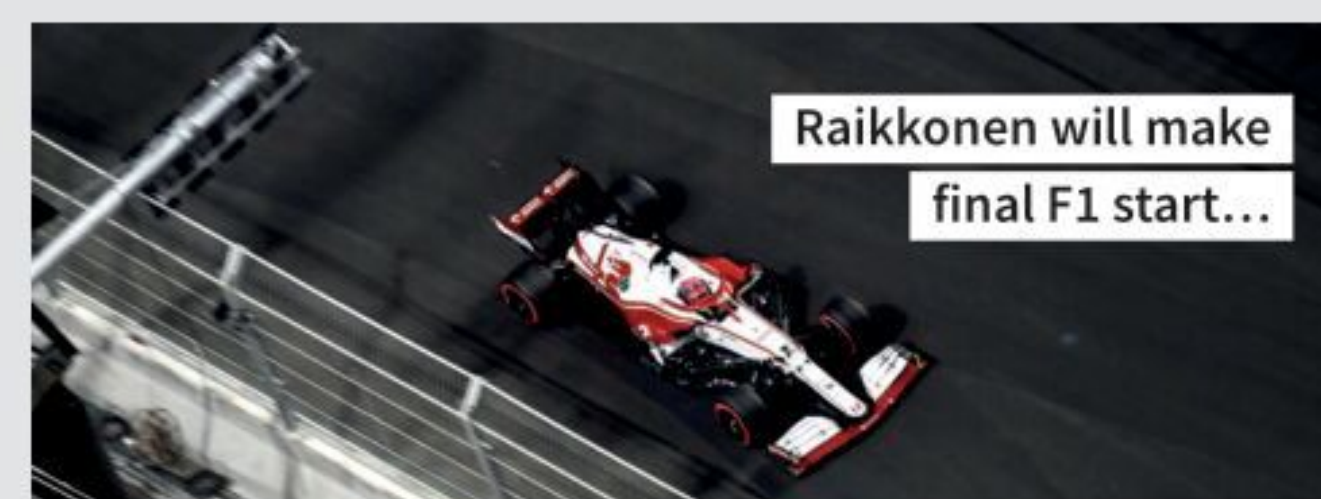
CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Verstappen	369.5
2	Hamilton	369.5
3	Bottas	218
4	Perez	190
5	Leclerc	158

Constructors

1	Mercedes	587.5
2	Red Bull	559.5
3	Ferrari	307.5
4	McLaren	269
5	Alpine	149



RACE STATS

Previous winners

2020	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2019	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2018	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Valtteri Bottas	Mercedes
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2014	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Kimi Raikkonen	Lotus
2011	Lewis Hamilton	McLaren



Best results

Hamilton	1st x 5
Vettel	1st x 3
Bottas	1st x 1
Verstappen	1st x 1
Raikkonen	1st x 1
Alonso	2nd x 2
Leclerc	3rd x 1
Ricciardo	4th x 2
Perez	5th x 1
Norris	5th x 1

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The line that was finally crossed

Max Verstappen's brilliance is what has made this season so special. Which makes the unedifying display at the Saudi Arabian GP all the more disappointing

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

There are two main ways of assessing Formula 1's first race in Saudi Arabia. One, that it was an action-packed thriller – a race of unpredictable drama and spectacle on a challenging track that set up the first season finale in 47 years to have two contenders level on points at the top. Or two, that it was a disrupted, disjointed event on a needlessly dangerous track, where the fight between the title rivals went too far, too often.

There are, naturally, plenty more ways of assessing the Jeddah race – having an opinion when you don't have any particular material interest in the outcome of a sporting event is all part of the fun. Personal preferences come into it from a fan's perspective, but it was disappointing to once again know that F1's various social media audiences had turned toxic even before the race was over. But one view on the 21st race of F1's 2021 campaign has it ending on a sour note. One of a certain undefinable quality – but not a good one...

Things didn't feel that way pre-race. The main straight and grid opposite the pits were narrow and brightly lit ahead of the start. As the cars formed up and their crews took them to their places, George Russell initially being pushed alongside Lewis Hamilton as a neat reminder of their exciting subplot to watch in 2022, the temperature rose. It foreshadowed what was to come. As the Red Bull mechanics pushed Max Verstappen and his RB16B past on the grid, this writer, reflecting on the end-of-season considerations

“There is such a thing as winning the right way. And Verstappen isn't doing that”

this time of year brings, believed that the Dutchman remained the best driver of the campaign. Two hours later, that view had changed.

Verstappen finally went too far in his attacking moves on Hamilton. The pattern had been set from the opening races of the season. Imola was Hamilton having to cede ground against an immovable Verstappen, but at Barcelona his 'my way or no way' attitude was evident. It was there again in his third-start double-pass on Hamilton and Esteban Ocon last Sunday – the right side of legal (but only just), and requiring his rival to turn away from a collision, although into contact with the Alpine.

Bold, brilliant stuff from Verstappen. But his other two moves at the same corner only met the first adjective. Having lost the second start with his hard tyres not fired up to temperature, Verstappen refused to concede he'd lost a lead he'd lucked

into with the first red flag. When Hamilton attacked on lap 37 in a sequence notably similar to the Turn 4 events in Brazil, it was obvious what Verstappen would do. On both occasions he completed his manoeuvre off-track, and on each occasion the officials took a dim view.

“In Brazil it was fine and now suddenly I get a penalty for it,” Verstappen said afterwards. “Well, you could clearly see both didn't make the corner.”

In both instances, it doesn't matter that Hamilton ended up off-track. It was clear to see in Brazil and in Jeddah that Verstappen's trajectory took them both wide, and Hamilton shouldn't have had to impede himself further because his opponent had failed to stay within the white lines.

This is on the FIA. Verstappen notes that he wasn't penalised in Brazil, which suggests he fully intended to go right up to that interpretation of the rules again. Had Michael Masi been firmer – ideally, backed up by permanent stewards F1 badly seems to need now – perhaps the unedifying display witnessed last weekend could have been avoided, because there is such a thing as winning the right way. And Verstappen isn't doing that. Brazil was a far superior race to the shunt-fest in Jeddah, even if the contest was over far earlier. F1 is at its best when there is a blend of daring brilliance, risk and challenge – ideally wheel-to-wheel fights that stay clean.

Verstappen is so good. His speed and mental capacity behind the wheel are a truly tremendous combination. It seems inevitable that he will win multiple titles eventually. The first could still come this weekend, although Mercedes notes that there are no development tyres to distract it in Abu Dhabi practice this year, Hamilton isn't recovering from a bout of COVID, and the track changes need to be understood.

The varied view on Verstappen's driving isn't a nationalism thing – that's a lazy attack (especially considering we're all on a rock hurtling through space towards our inevitable individual dooms!). It's just that he seems to lack the last element to be a true sporting great. Hamilton has it – respect for sporting fairness and ethics. That's not to say he's infallible, as his move to push Verstappen wide once he'd been allowed through for the decisive time late in the race showed, although that's perhaps a reflection of exasperation at his rival's antics rather than anything really dastardly.

That sour note can finally be defined. It was disappointment in Verstappen. He is his final Jeddah qualifying lap, in which he produced a display of such incredible skill and speed that he seemed to be racing towards his title destiny until it went fractionally wrong and he couldn't accept it, in human form. Brilliant, brilliant, but blunted. ❧

 **P18 SAUDI ARABIAN GP REPORT**



A thriller, but needs to be safer

Saudi's new F1 circuit delivered a memorable first event, although not necessarily for all the right reasons. Small changes could make significant improvements

LUKE SMITH

Saudi Arabia was clear with its intentions for its first Formula 1 race. It looked to make a statement by delivering a grandiose event, an approach that extended to the track layout and design. Marketed as F1's fastest and longest street track at a shade under four miles, the Jeddah Corniche Circuit drew comparisons to Baku before a car even hit the track. It boasted 27 corners, a number of high-speed sections and only three big braking points.

The feedback was initially positive. Valtteri Bottas got straight over the radio to Mercedes in FP1 to say, "F***, this track is cool", and the risk and reward on offer was clear in qualifying when Max Verstappen pushed too hard at the final corner.

But warning signs were already there. Nikita Mazepin was lucky not to hit Lewis Hamilton at the blind Turn 22 in FP3 after Mercedes failed to warn the world champion in time about the oncoming car, and a number of drivers were braced for incidents in the race.

And that's exactly what followed. Even standing on the grid in Jeddah, the narrowness of the track was clear. The first start was well-behaved, but the crashes after the first red-flag restart were largely down to the tight bottleneck exiting Turn 2. Sergio Perez and Charles Leclerc made contact, sending Perez's car sideways. It left Mazepin with nowhere to go but into the rear of George Russell's Williams after he had slowed in reaction to the cars ahead. It was a big hit, and one Mazepin felt fortunate to walk away from.

"You wouldn't do Suzuka with walls – and that's what they've done here, more or less"

"The place is so tight that when Sergio was sideways, it took about 85% of the circuit," Mazepin said. "There wasn't enough time to stop. It was impossible to avoid George."

Russell has quickly emerged as a leading voice among his peers in F1, and was elected as a Grand Prix Drivers' Association director at the start of the year. His maturity was on show again after the incident as he made his concerns about the track clear, calling for safety changes: "[There is] a lot to learn for motorsport this weekend. It's an incredibly exhilarating and exciting track to drive, but it's lacking a lot from a safety perspective and a racing perspective. There are unnecessary incidents waiting to happen in all of these small kinks that are blind, which are not even corners in an F1 car. They just offer unnecessary danger."

Russell is right. The track, while thrilling, did feel like it had

a lot of corners that served little purpose and weren't really corners. "It could all just be made into a straight line from Turn 2 to Turn 4, and just be straight from Turn 17 to 22," Russell said, adding it was a "no-brainer" to make small changes that would drastically improve safety. F1 race director Michael Masi saw it differently, saying the track would require only some "fine tuning" but "nothing in a major way".

Even after the red flags, the race felt truncated because of the regular incidents and the time taken to clear debris. Many drivers were confused why there were so many VSCs without a full safety car. "At some point I started to think we're going to do half the race under VSC or safety car if it keeps going like this," said Pierre Gasly, who also called for better visibility and fewer blind corners to make the track safer.

Sebastian Vettel added that it "doesn't take much" for a big accident at Jeddah. "I think Suzuka is an amazing track, but you wouldn't do Suzuka with walls – and that's what they've done here, more or less," he said. "It's challenging, but pointless to be so blind for so long."

"Suzuka with walls" sums it up perfectly (except the fastest lap at the 2019 Japanese GP was 142.8mph; last weekend it was 152.2mph, just 0.6mph slower than Monza!). We want tracks to be thrilling and to test drivers' commitment, to show them at their best. The first 26 corners of Verstappen's Q3 lap were exactly that, the brilliance and bravery evidenced by Fernando Alonso's stunned reaction in the TV pen, which is a must-watch video.

But a track cannot be good for just a single lap. It needs to be safe and to be conducive to a clean event, and Jeddah could really do with some tweaks to make this more of a possibility ahead of its next race, which takes place in less than four months' time.

Saudi Arabia nevertheless got the memorable first F1 race it craved. The grid was the busiest since wider personnel were allowed back on as VIPs, and dignitaries soaked up the latest major sporting event to come to the kingdom. But it also again led to questions about where F1 sits with countries holding questionable human-rights records amid the wider 'sportswashing' debate. Hamilton was the most vocal driver on Thursday, saying he was not fully comfortable racing in Saudi Arabia and there was "a lot of change that needs to happen" in the country.

Hamilton made a point by again wearing his pride-flag helmet to race in Saudi Arabia, where same-sex relationships are illegal. I spotted a handful of people on the grid also making smaller but similar statements, such as wearing rainbow-flag headbands or bracelets. F1 has always maintained that its presence in countries with questionable human-rights records is about helping to encourage change and progress. With a long-term deal in place, Saudi Arabia is likely to be the truest test of F1's role in that yet. 🏁

YOUR SAY

I compete in club racing and see a 'let me pass or we crash' attitude among some drivers, more prevalent in some series than others

ALAN EVANS

Driving standards' trickle-down effect

Having watched the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix I feel I must comment on how the driving attitudes exhibited by certain top drivers over the past 20 or 30 years are being seen in club racing to the detriment of the latter.

I compete in club racing and see a 'let me pass or we crash' attitude among some drivers, more prevalent in some series than others, I must admit. This attitude started substantially with Ayrton Senna, was continued by Michael Schumacher and we now see Max Verstappen picking up the baton.

Without meaningful penalties, younger drivers coming up through the junior series have seen this as an acceptable way to race, in my view. We must stamp down on 'aggressive' (for which I mean dangerous) driving in all categories, ultimately for the long-term good of our sport.

Alan Evans

By email

Senna, Schumacher... Verstappen

If Max Verstappen is now allowed to win the 2021 drivers' championship, it will be a sad day for our sport; it will put him in a bracket with the likes of Ayrton Senna and Michael Schumacher, for all the wrong reasons. If Lewis Hamilton takes his eighth world title, it will be a good day for sport in general.

Drivers of the ilk of Jim Clark, Dan Gurney and Stirling Moss must be squirming in their graves. I would love to know the opinions of Sir Jackie Stewart and Alain Prost on current driving standards at the front of the F1 field.

Andrew Beint

Chippenham, Wilts

'Suzuka 1990' scenario

For our final Formula 1 race we now have a Senna/Prost scenario. All that is needed for Max Verstappen to be world champion is for neither car to finish the race. If that happens, you heard it here first.

Paul Caldwell

Widnes, Cheshire



Don't ruin a wonderful season

Max and Lewis, you are both outstanding drivers and a real joy to watch – to a certain point. If you can't accept that the other one is faster in a particular GP this will end in tears. Good luck for both of you in the final race. Don't mess up a wonderful season and respect each other.

Ari Jakobson

Espoo, Finland

A favour from Frank

Jerez airport. As I picked up Bernie Ecclestone and Herbie Blash on the Thursday prior to the grand prix, I noticed that Frank Williams, at the foot of the plane steps, had a folded copy of that day's Autosport. I had never met Frank, but asked: "Maybe I can have a look at that when you have read it? I haven't seen one for six or seven weeks." He smiled and said: "OK then."

I thought nothing more of it until Saturday morning when a Williams senior staff member sought me out and handed me the Autosport "compliments of Frank". A very nice touch – and one that provided me with the following week's dinner reading material! Thanks Frank.

Marshall Pugh

Promoter Gran Premio Formula Uno™ Tio Pepe de España 1989/1990

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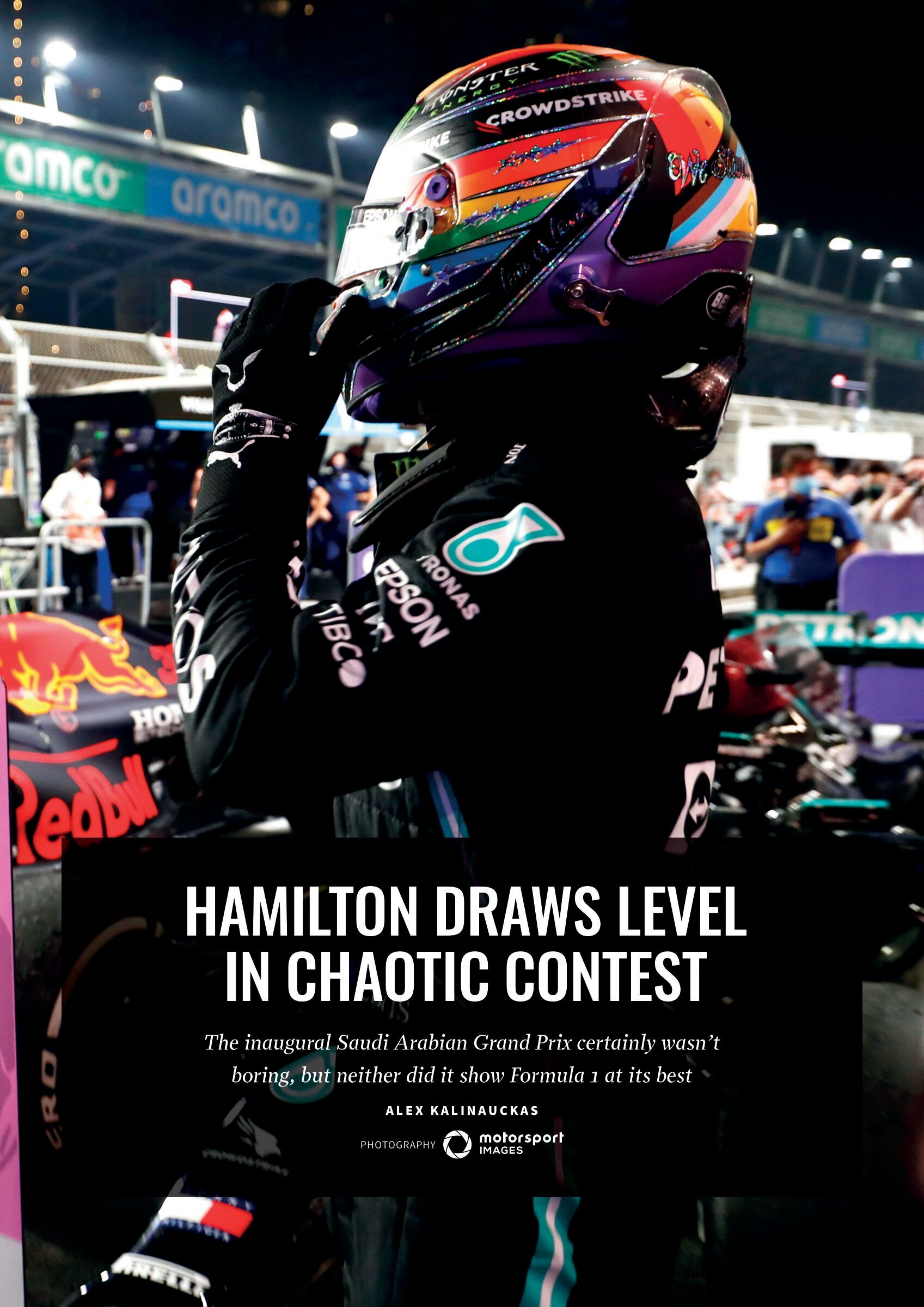
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Gap between Verstappen and Hamilton, with Max ahead on wins countback

SBLOXHAM





HAMILTON DRAWS LEVEL IN CHAOTIC CONTEST

The inaugural Saudi Arabian Grand Prix certainly wasn't boring, but neither did it show Formula 1 at its best

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY  **motorsport**
IMAGES



Formula 1 is obsessed with the ‘Netflix effect’. It’s easy to see why. Ever since *Drive to Survive* premiered in 2019, the documentary series that plays fast and loose with sporting reality is credited with attracting new fans to the championship globally.

Netflix is more than a media giant. It’s a verb – and famously rather a naughty one. But ‘Netflix’ also encompasses how people consume many of the programmes on its platforms: they binge them. The shows play automatically – it’s assumed that you always want ‘just one more’.

And that’s basically what happened in Saudi Arabia’s first F1 race. It was a stop/start thriller eventually won by Lewis Hamilton over his arch-nemesis, Max Verstappen. Action-packed and seemingly never-ending, it was a six-part Netflix drama series, which revealed the extent of how much the championship’s soul has changed.

EPISODE ONE: A FORMULA AWAKENS

The start of the 50-lap race on the shores of the Red Sea was thematically pretty familiar to anyone who has watched one of the plethora of sporting documentaries churned out in recent years, in that it followed a simple scene-setting formula.

When the lights initially went out in Jeddah, a blast of action was followed by a period of tedium that set up what would follow – very F1 – as Hamilton and team-mate Valtteri Bottas roared away from their shared front row. They were chased by Verstappen, whose gearbox had passed a post-qualifying-crash investigation and been assessed as healthy. But where the Mercedes duo got things wrong in defending a 1-2 start against the marauding Verstappen in Mexico, here they were perfect in “the only part of the race that was in anyway rehearsed”, according to team director of trackside engineering Andrew Shovlin.

Hamilton led comfortably on the outside line into the short, 90-degree left-hander at the end of the main straight, with Bottas positioned impeccably as rear gunner on the inside. This left Verstappen with no alternative but to slot his Red Bull in behind the Finn as they ran through the immediately ensuing longer right corner (Turn 2) past the pit exit. Hamilton jumped to a 1.0s lead at the end of the first tour, which he doubled over the next seven laps as the leaders quickly pulled clear of the chasing Charles Leclerc and Sergio Perez.

“We started to see as we got into that stint Lewis could push and pull out a gap as required,” Shovlin explained of Hamilton being told to up his pace here to pull clear of Bottas, which not only increased his advantage over Verstappen but also meant his team-mate didn’t have to slide around in so much dirty air.

After the tension of the start, the first part of the first stint was pretty dull – much more ‘Unplugged’ than DTS. At least it lasted only about as long as an episode of Formula E’s YouTube-based attempt to launch its own DTS-inspired interest...

Then a plot-twist: on lap nine the safety car was called after Mick Schumacher suffered a heavy crash “trying too hard to get back into the DRS window [behind George Russell] and lost it at [Turn] 22”, the violently fast left kink where Leclerc had also shunted forcefully in FP2.

Mercedes called its drivers into the pits, and Bottas dropped from 2.6s behind Hamilton at the start of the lap Schumacher never completed to run 6.0s adrift as he entered the pits. This, entirely understandably, enraged Verstappen, who fumed over his team radio about Bottas’s tactics to allow enough time for a Mercedes doublestack.

But here Red Bull did something unexpected – it left Verstappen out, which meant he led Hamilton and Bottas at the head of the safety car queue. He therefore remained on his starting medium tyres, while the chasing Black Arrows ran hards that could easily reach the finish on Jeddah’s ultra-smooth and low-wear track surface.

Red Bull needed another twist and it got it, with race director



QUALIFYING



Nothing else mattered in qualifying. Not Mick Schumacher beating Nikita Mazepin by a second despite not having DRS for the whole of the final zone on his best Q1 lap; not Aston Martin underwhelming with a double Q1 elimination; not Carlos Sainz Jr's inability to save a half-spin when he ran the mediums in Q2 and didn't correct his Ferrari's balance enough. Only Max Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton mattered.

The teams were confused. In Q1, many drivers were fuelled for the entire opening segment, with tyre strategies split. The ultra-smooth surface and long layout created the challenge – the drivers had to carefully get the tyres heated and work the rubber to provide optimum grip, even for the long acceleration zones where temperatures could drop. Jeddah's flowing nature also meant the Pirellis were heating up at different points, and the rubber laid down in practice altered the surface roughness, which meant tyre preparation targets were moving. All in, 183 laps were completed in Q1 alone.

Mercedes' struggles were illustrated best in Q2, where Verstappen needed just two laps on the mediums to progress. Hamilton completed eight. And when they went back to the softs for Q3, it was as if the world champion was struggling more. His first flier had to be abandoned after going too deep at Turn 1 and cutting Turn 2, then he registered a ragged 1m28.035s with "a lot of snaps".

After "consolidating my thoughts", Hamilton's 1m27.511s third lap was much smoother. It overcame Verstappen's 0.382s advantage after the Dutchman's first run.

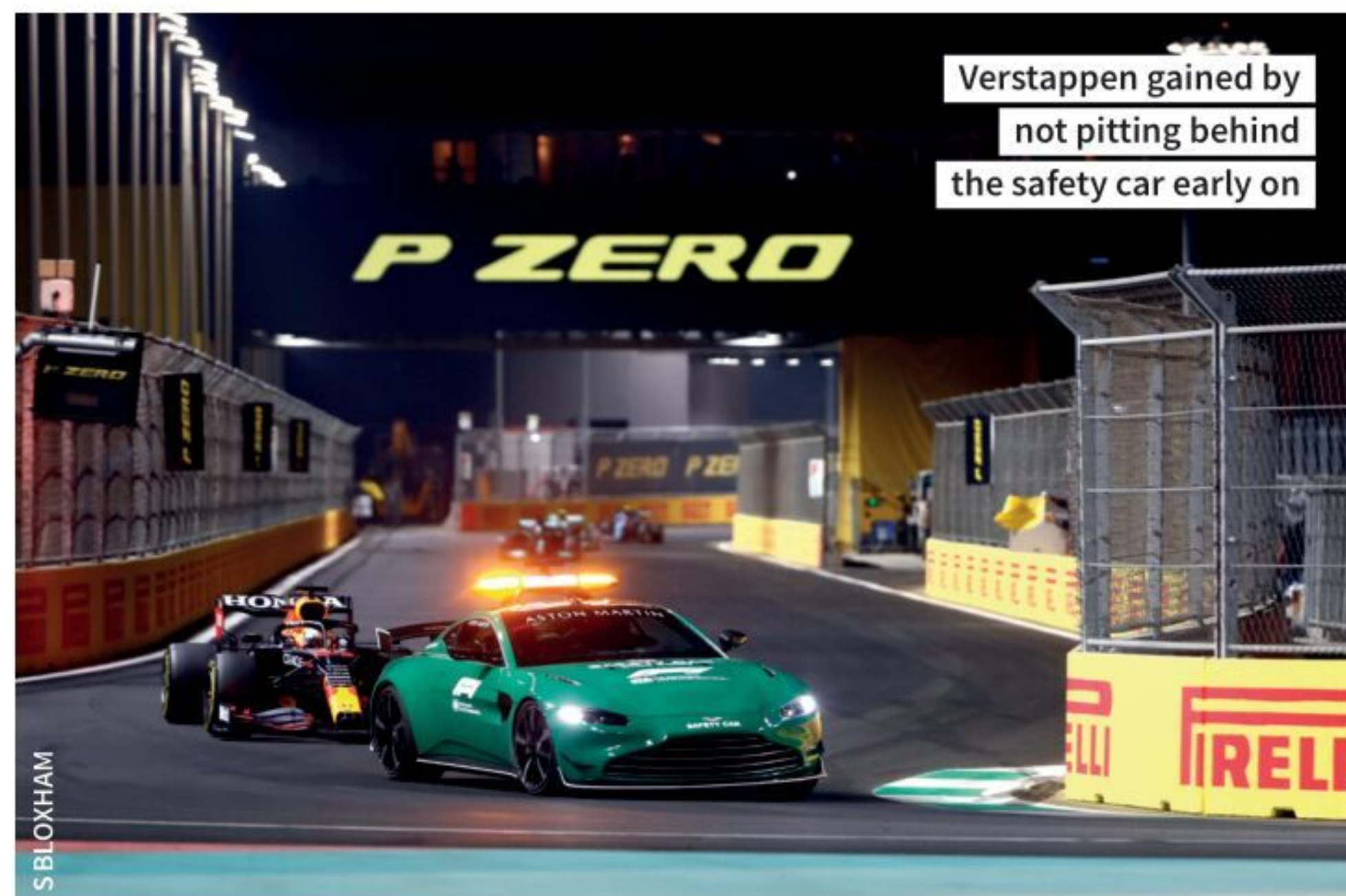
But Verstappen wasn't finished. His second Q3 lap was set to be one of the greatest in F1 history. He nearly kissed the wall

squirming under power out of Turn 2, then he was stunning through the shockingly fast Turn 22 left flick (where Charles Leclerc, about to qualify an amazing fourth, had crashed heavily in FP2). He was 0.244s up over Hamilton after two sectors and, with the final third offering little technical cornering challenge, pole was his to lose. Which he did.

"For my feeling, I was braking at the same point, but I had a little lock-up," he said of his last-corner error. But the greater mistake was then booting it out of the left-hand hairpin from the wider, dirtier line, which meant he clipped the wall with his right-rear – his suspension broken and the lap destroyed.

Third behind Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas was the result – then came a nervous wait to find out if his gearbox had survived, something that will run until the season's end.

"VERSTAPPEN WASN'T FINISHED. HIS SECOND Q3 LAP WAS SET TO BE ONE OF THE GREATEST IN F1 HISTORY"



Michael Masi soon stopping the race so the Turn 22 barriers could be assessed and rearranged. Hamilton aired his suspicious views on the decision as the cars returned to the pitlane, where Verstappen was able to take the hards in a free pitstop and the fictional credits rolled.

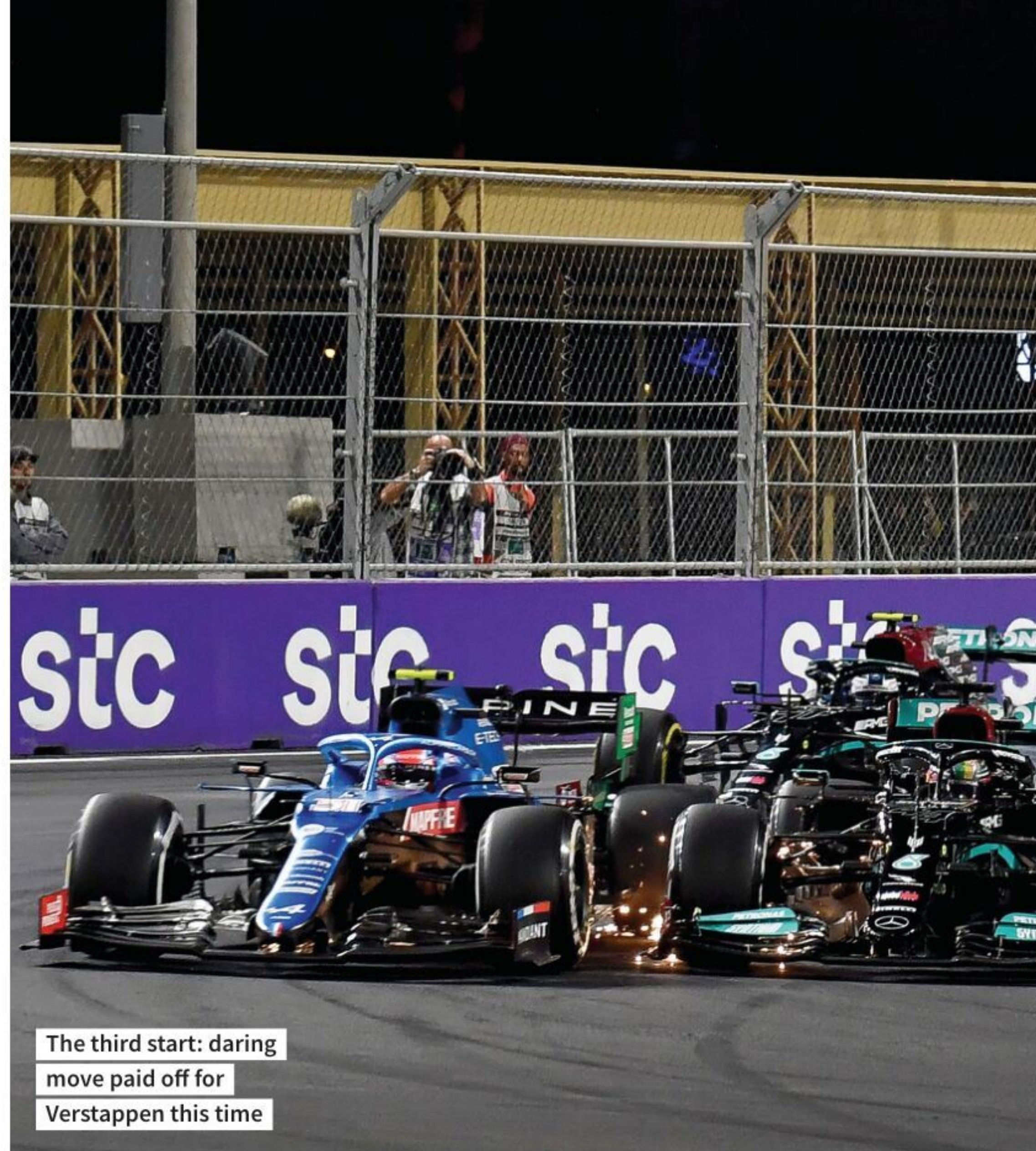
EPISODE TWO: ATTACK OF THE BULL

After a near 20-minute halt, the race resumed with a second standing start at the beginning of lap 15, with both title contenders annoyed by separate issues on the lap out of the pits following the safety car. Hamilton felt Verstappen performed a practice start while pulling away in the pitlane, while the leader was upset because the Mercedes was not following closely enough.

Hamilton's slow arrival back to the grid had a direct impact on what would happen at the second start, since it meant Verstappen's hards >>

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The third start: daring move paid off for Verstappen this time

cooled and lost performance — something the teams had been battling with all weekend given the track's smooth surface and long layout. It was just too easy for the tyres to fall from their best operating window.

The result for Verstappen was that when the lights went out again, he was easily beaten away by Hamilton, who surged back into the lead approaching Turn 1. But here, Verstappen made a move similar to the one that nearly ended in tragedy at Monza — he stayed on the outside line and attacked Hamilton as the left-hander unfolded. But that was always going to end with a trip through the runoff, which meant Verstappen cut Turn 2 and held up Hamilton as he rejoined.

This allowed a new character to enter the picture: Esteban Ocon. The Hungarian GP winner will surely have his own episode on DTS season four, but here he was an important bit-part player in the Verstappen/Hamilton melodrama. He'd risen from ninth at the first start to seventh before the safety car, under which he stayed out to leap to fourth and then gained as Verstappen did with a free pitstop for hard tyres under the red flag. First Ocon gained from Bottas's heavy lock-up and slide deep at Turn 1 following the second standing start, and then, when Hamilton and Verstappen were clumsily and slowly going around Turn 2, the Alpine was able to nip past Hamilton to take second.

Chaos reigned in the pack behind when Perez was spun into the Turn 3 wall by contact with Leclerc, who had nowhere to go on the inside as the pair ran a staggered three abreast with Pierre Gasly (to Perez's right). The Red Bull was eliminated, with the following drivers having to stamp on the brakes in avoiding action. One of these was Russell, whose Williams was in turn rear-ended by the unfortunate and unsighted Nikita Mazepin. Next chapter...



Verstappen cut Turn 2 to stay ahead of his rival. Not for the last time...

ETHERINGTON



ANDRE

“IF HE’S GOING TO THE STEWARDS HE’S GOING TO GET A PENALTY, SO WE CONCEDED THE GRID POSITION”

EPISODE THREE: ENTER THE BUREAUCRAT

Some of the best episodes of drama series don’t contain a second of ‘action’ – be that shots fired in a modern war epic or racing laps in a fly-on-the-wall F1 soap opera. And what happened next in Jeddah fitted that mould.

With the cars formed up in the pitlane once again, Masi engaged in a series of phone calls with Jonathan Wheatley and Ron Meadows – the respective sporting directors at Red Bull and Mercedes. He proposed that Verstappen be moved back behind Hamilton for the third grid start, which would elevate Ocon to the race’s third polesitter and avoid a stewards’ investigation over Verstappen’s second-start, Turns 1/2 antics.

“When I saw it happen at Turn 2 I immediately suggested to the stewards that I’m going to give the team the ability to give that place back,” Masi said of a radio exchange situation no different to recommendations that have occurred many times before to give positions back during racing laps. “The red flag obviously ensued very quickly thereafter, and that was absolutely the priority before we got going again. Being under a suspension, [the discussion with Red Bull] was the ability to effectively correct that before we went racing again.”

Red Bull team boss Christian Horner quipped that the exchange was “a bit like being down the souk”, as Wheatley asked for time for Red Bull to decide, which was granted during the second actual 20-minute race suspension. “We decided that if he’s going to go to the stewards, he’s going to get a penalty,” Horner explained. “So that’s why we conceded the grid position for the restart.”

EPISODE FOUR: VERSTAPPEN STRIKES BACK (LEGALLY)

Once again, fictional opening credits are clearing and another start is coming, with Red Bull’s decision having made Ocon the big winner. And again, Hamilton shot from second to race into a leading position at Turn 1 after a third standing start. But this time, without Bottas’s protection, the far inside line was vulnerable.

Here Verstappen plunged. He’d warded off any intentions Daniel Ricciardo might have had against the pitwall from fifth (the McLaren »

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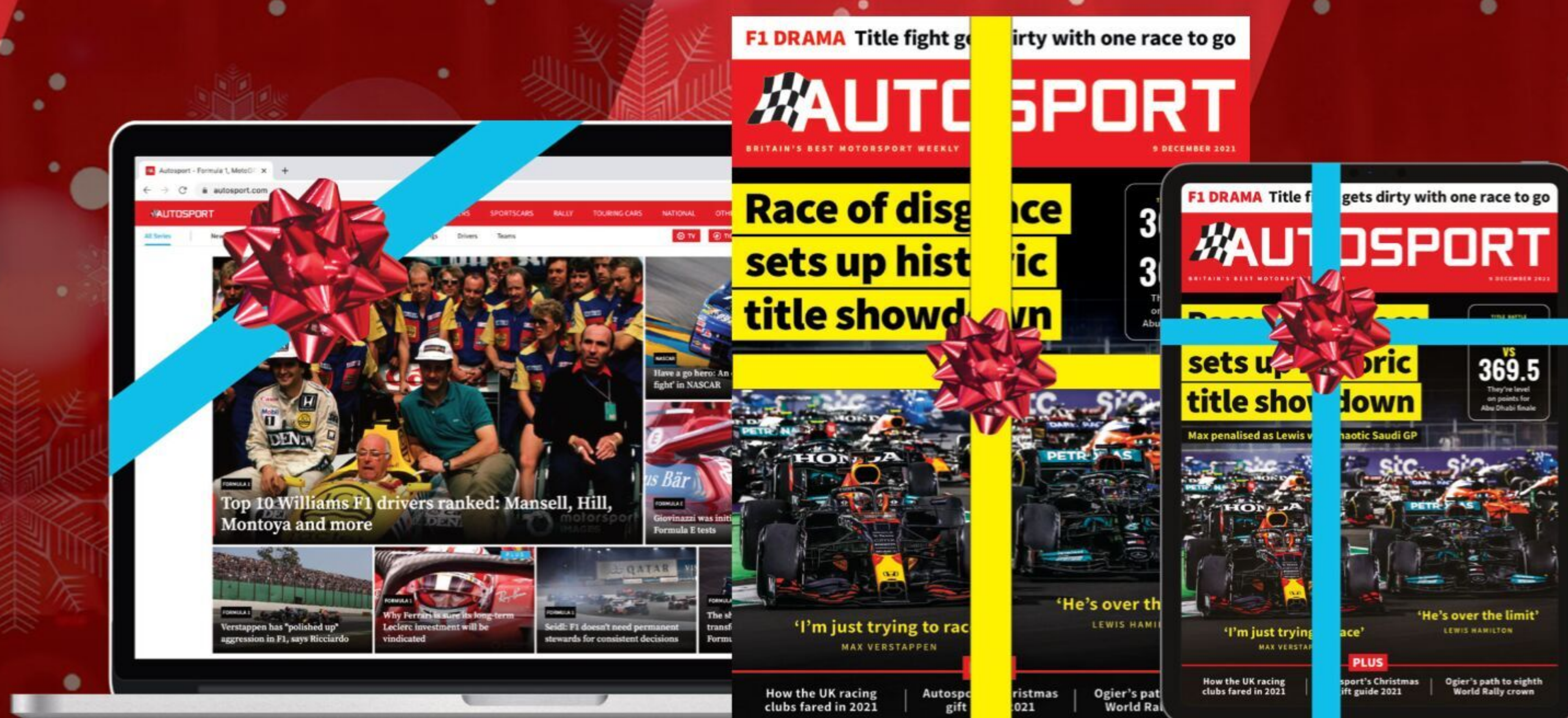
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eventually got ahead of Bottas out of the opening corners), and then made his move: alongside Hamilton and Ocon, three into Turn 1. The move stuck, *just*, and was *just* legal – but it didn't escape notice that Hamilton had to turn away from contact with the Red Bull once again, which meant that he and Ocon collided.

"He got sandwiched and Esteban rode over it," Shovlin said of the right-hand side of Hamilton's front-wing endplate. "We were quite lucky that it just sort of seemed to hit the road. We lost a few bits but no more damage."

Ocon was forced off at Turn 1 and cut Turn 2, rejoining in front of Hamilton, who easily overcame the Alpine with a rapid and simple run into the sequence the next time by to go on to chase after his main rival. He was doing so on the same set of hards he'd taken at his safety car stop, the sole set he'd had available for the race, while Red Bull had put Verstappen, who had the same pre-race allocation of the harder compounds, back on the mediums during the second red-flag stoppage.

"WE WERE LUCKY THAT THE ENDPLATE JUST SORT OF HIT THE ROAD. WE LOST A FEW BITS BUT NO MORE DAMAGE"

Its decision to cede the restart positions had, said Horner, "in turn pushed us towards taking the mediums, because that was the only way on the first lap we were going to be able to have the chance of passing Lewis, which Max truly did". A tyre-offset chase was then on. Very F1 again, an engineering challenge, but also very Netflix...

EPISODE FIVE: THE DEBRIS MENACE

Another TV cliché mashed with an F1 metaphor was happening: an episode with all the main characters absent, events seen through the eyes of the supporting cast.

On lap 23, with Verstappen leading Hamilton by 1.3s and with Ocon already 7.7s adrift, the race was neutralised again. This time it was with a virtual safety car, needed to remove Yuki Tsunoda's front wing from the Turn 2 outside runoff after he'd punted Sebastian Vettel into a spin. He'd tried to pass the Aston Martin on the outside of Turn 1 and then clipped its right-rear when he climbed over the Turn 2 kerbs.

Tsunoda got a five-second penalty for causing the collision, with Vettel also shedding parts after hitting the barriers backwards and then clashing with Kimi Raikkonen's Alfa Romeo in a lap 26 incident at the Turn 4 left-hander, where they'd tried to go side-by-side. This triggered two more VSCs – the third overall lasting over three laps from



Yuki Tsunoda was an extra, but recovered from this to at least finish

SUTTON

the 29th tour – as the debris was cleared. Green flag racing returned on lap 33, but a fourth VSC, lasting just a few seconds, was needed immediately when another piece of Aston fell off at the entry to Turn 14.

Vettel would eventually retire with floor damage from his second incident; Tsunoda headed Raikkonen as the last lapped finishers; while Ocon lost third to Bottas right at the chequered flag. Bottas had finally won a lengthy battle to repass Ricciardo 10 laps earlier and, after Ocon lost a chunk of his floor with two tours left (a legacy of being squeezed into the right-side wall by Tsunoda at the original start), the DRS-armed Mercedes closed in. It powered past, just as the Alpine's engine derated in sight of the finish, Bottas rescuing his podium right at the last moment. But the battle at the front was the real climax.

EPISODE SIX: RETURN OF THE CONTROVERSIAL CRASHES

Silverstone, Monza... and again in Jeddah. The title contenders crashed once more. But this time both survived to finish, and it all stemmed from the final VSC restart.

All through the 19 tours that followed the third start, Hamilton had stayed in touch with Verstappen, who was using the mediums' bite >>



Esteban Ocon played a leading cameo before losing third on the line

SBLOXHAM



TRACKSIDE VIEW

Even with all the resources poured into Formula 1 simulator technology, there is, of course, no substitute for the real thing. The teams have arrived in Jeddah with varying degrees of preparation, and some, including Alfa Romeo, have not created the 3.83-mile track digitally to give the drivers preparation time – not that this has made Kimi Raikkonen any keener to do a track walk ahead of his penultimate grand prix start. So the early laps of FP1 are inevitably spent building up towards the limit, with plenty of experiments with lines and braking points.

Autosport heads for the first two corners of the new track, passing various circuit facilities still being built beyond the paddock turnstiles as the cars queue at the pit exit, headed by the Ferrari drivers, where a sewage smell is strong. Our view takes in the short, 90-degree left-hander at the end of the main straight and the longer right turn that takes in the pit exit and sends the cars into the first high-speed flowing sequence.

Despite it being a new venue, there's no massive hurry for the whole pack to get out. Lewis Hamilton misses nearly all the opening 10 minutes before venturing out, but when he does appear, with title rival Max Verstappen setting the early pace,

“THE FERRARIS HEAD THE QUEUE AT THE PIT EXIT WHERE A SEWAGE SMELL IS STRONG”

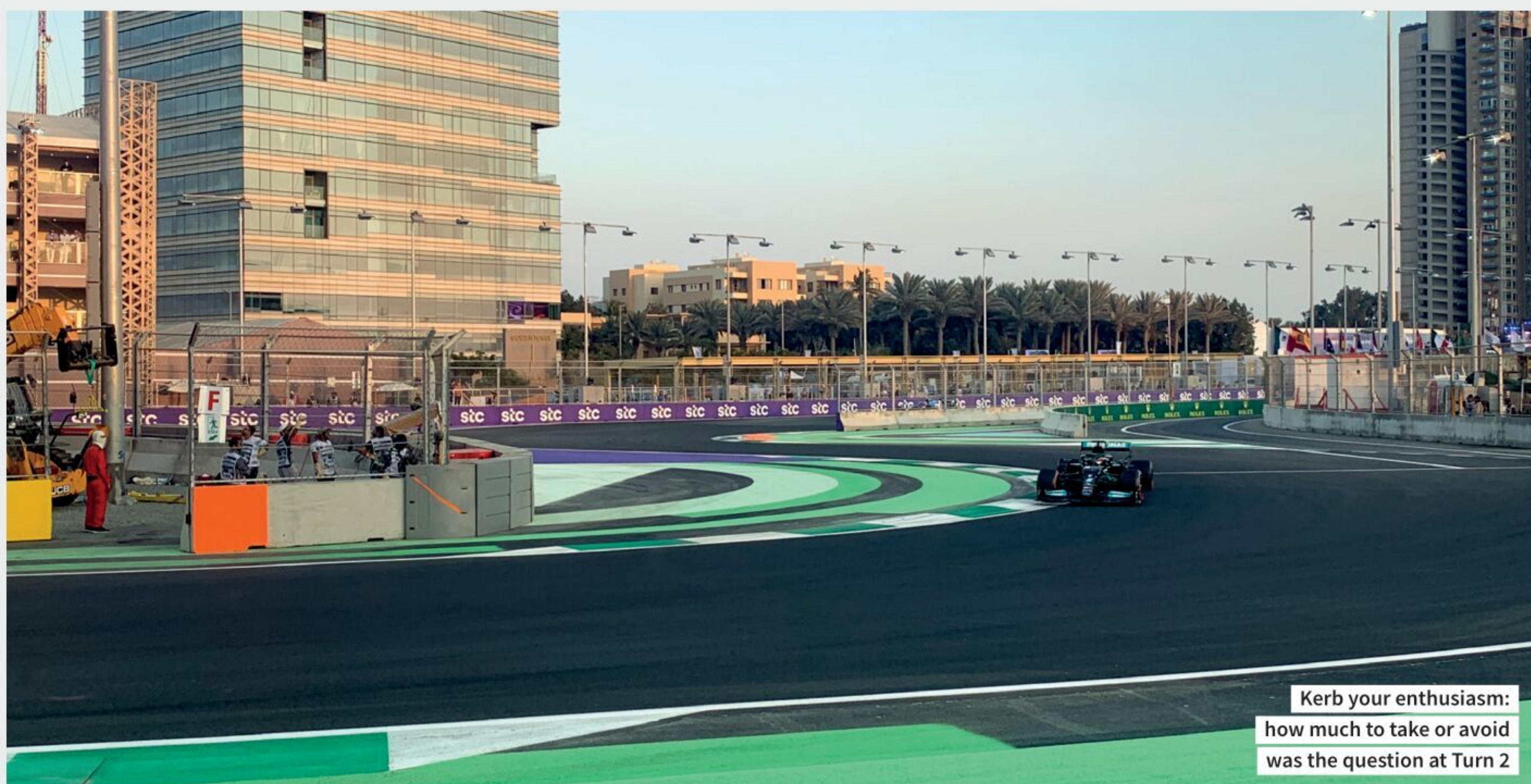
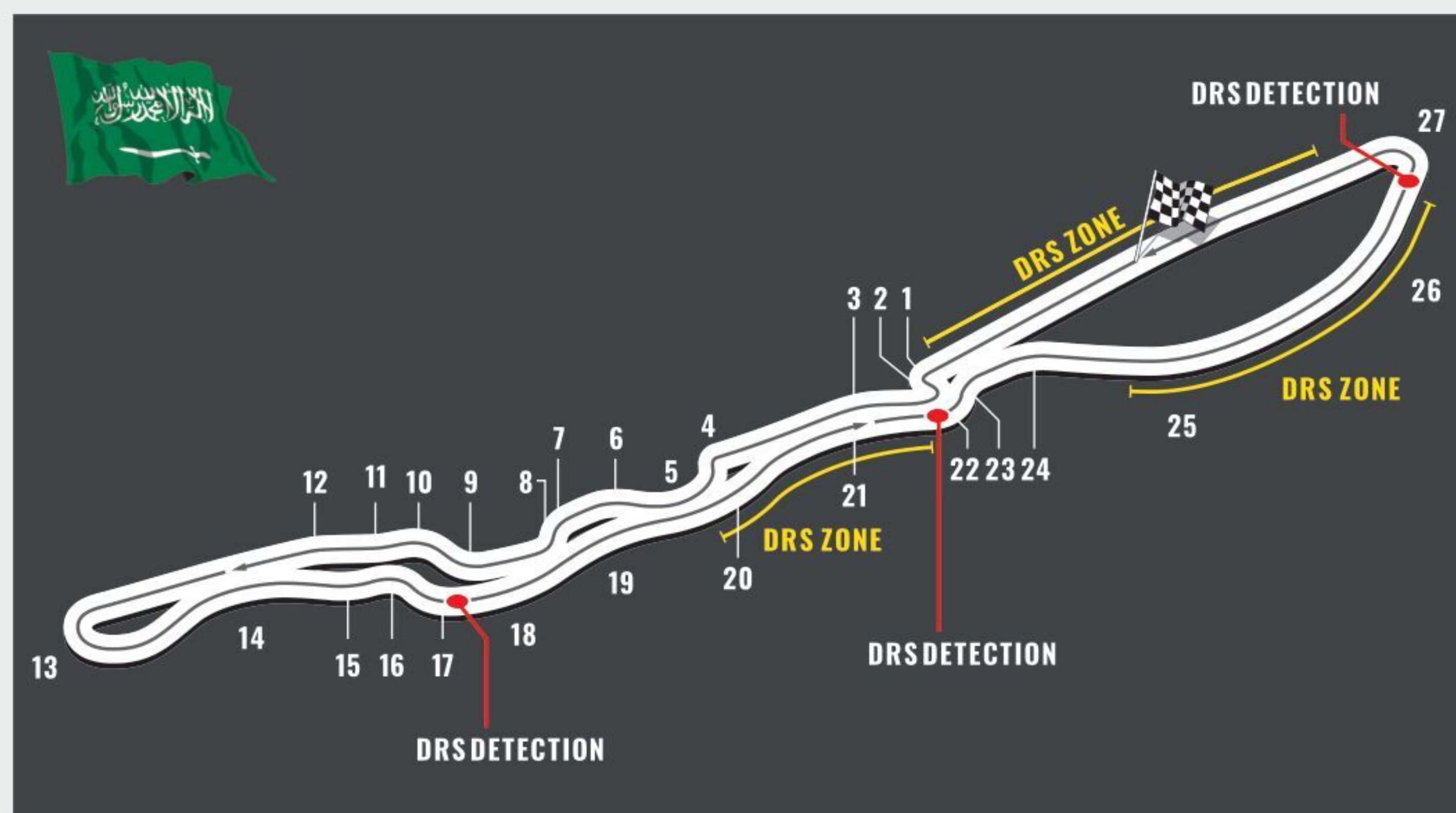
he begins a session-long lesson in building towards a better lap time. But it's his soon-to-be new team-mate who illustrates the challenge the drivers are facing at this sequence.

There's a high, orange sausage kerb on the inside of Turn 1 and wide, flatter green kerbs along the

inside of Turn 2. The test, as ever, is to flatten each apex as much as possible while keeping the car balanced and fast. Midway through, George Russell hits the Turn 1 kerbs as hard as anyone – Daniel Ricciardo and Charles Leclerc the first to climb over the sausage before moving away from it in later attempts – but he gets too far over the Turn 2 kerbs, having wrestled right with slightly cold tyres. Coming off them, where putting the power down is really tricky, his rear slides luridly, lap time bleeding away.

Verstappen and Sergio Perez go from a decent whack on the inside of Turn 1 to avoiding the kerbs altogether at Turn 2, but Hamilton is varying his line each time. He starts off barely clipping the inside of the left and sweeping around the right *à la* the Red Bulls, then he begins alternating with extra kerb or staying away. On the 1m29.786s that tops FP1, he is nearly half a car over the Turn 2 inside kerbs, but this time crucially maintaining the scintillating speed he carried while avoiding them earlier.

ALEX KALINAUCKAS



Kerb your enthusiasm:
how much to take or avoid
was the question at Turn 2



and the RB16B's downforce might to pull clear in the technical opening sector, a part of the track where Red Bull had proven dominant all weekend. The world champion then showed better top speed in the faster, flowing final two thirds, despite Verstappen running Red Bull's low-downforce rear wing, which Horner put down to "the advantage of Lewis's [Interlagos-fitted] engine showing up" and apparently being worth "approximately a second on the straights during the race once he was back in the DRS".

The leaders were allowed back to racing speed in the second half of lap 36, before Hamilton closed in and shot past Verstappen on the outside run to Turn 1. But the long-time leader did not give up and, in a near-repeat of his controversial move in Brazil, he stuck to the inside line and muscled back ahead past the apex, before the pair went into the runoff beyond the left-hander. Once again, Verstappen rejoined ahead from cutting Turn 2.

Masi took the same view as he had of the earlier clash at the same spot, and Verstappen was quickly ordered to give the place to Hamilton. But engineer Gianpiero Lambiase told him to do so "strategically" – a code to make sure he was within one second at the third and final DRS detection point, which was just before the turn-in spot for the final corner.

Verstappen therefore slowed through the shallow double-lefts of Turns 25 and 26 that precede the final left-hand hairpin, with Hamilton given no warning of what had been instructed by Masi as he approached the rear of the Red Bull.

Verstappen was "going slower and slower" and "braking and downshifting and he just stayed super-close behind me and I don't really understand why". Hamilton "really wasn't clear" what was happening, but he soon grasped "he was trying to let me past... before the DRS zone".

So, the Briton slowed too as Verstappen ran in the middle of the track, drifting right. Suddenly there was contact, and Hamilton's already-damaged front-right wing endplate was knocked off. Verstappen scampered clear but would be found guilty post-race of braking "suddenly (69 bar) and significantly, resulting in 2.4g deceleration" according to the stewards' document announcing the decision. This resulted in a further 10s addition that made no difference to the result, with Bottas 20.7s adrift on the road as he raced ahead of Ocon.

Further drama and confusion followed five laps later. Just before the stewards handed Verstappen a 5s addition for gaining a lasting advantage in the Turns 1/2 incident of lap 37, Red Bull ordered him to give Hamilton the lead.

He did so, but executed the Turn 27 DRS tactic and swooped back ahead in the hairpin, then pulled clear. On the next lap, seconds after being informed of his penalty, Verstappen made a solo call to let Hamilton past in the final corner again. This time Hamilton remained ahead, having missed the apex and forced Verstappen wide in a move Masi called "borderline on a black/white for unsportsmanlike-ship conduct" in a message to Meadows.

After this, Hamilton ran clear to win on the road by 6.8s, setting the fastest lap at 1m30.734s four from home despite his car damage costing him 0.4s each time around. Mercedes was in "two minds" about letting him chase the bonus point, said Shovlin, since it could see "other people struggling with the tyres". This included Verstappen, who Horner claimed had "a couple of cuts on the tyres [that] were pretty deep" and was "in a mode of trying to get the car to the finish".

The result means that, for the first time in 47 years, the F1 title contenders are level on points heading to the final round and episode. What a season finale – fictional drama series or actual sporting reality – awaits. ❧



NEXT F1 REPORT

ABU DHABI GRAND PRIX 16 DECEMBER ISSUE

All the details of the showdown as Lewis Hamilton and Max Verstappen go head to head for the F1 title.

FERRARI SCORES POINTS BUT MISSES CHANCE

Ferrari emerged from the Jeddah chaos with another double points haul, but did not fulfil its potential from having the third-fastest car last weekend.

Charles Leclerc ran fourth early on before he lost out under the first red flag, after he'd pitted under the initial safety car, to drop to sixth. Meanwhile, Carlos Sainz Jr profited from the situation to move up to ninth. At the first restart, Leclerc was squeezed by Sergio Perez on the tightening run between Turns 2 and 3 and spun the Red Bull into the wall, triggering the incidents that led to the second stoppage. The clash was investigated post-race by the stewards, who deemed neither driver predominantly at fault.

For the second race resumption, both Ferrari drivers struggled initially and dropped outside the top 10, with the pair later swapping places after Leclerc had stayed ahead of his team-mate by cutting Turn 2 in the aftermath of the Yuki Tsunoda/Sebastian Vettel incident. The pair later overhauled Antonio Giovinazzi before Sainz's medium tyres faded and the hard-shod Leclerc was able to pounce at the final corner on the penultimate lap to take back seventh.

"We have been unlucky with all the situations of the race and I think we are clearly the third car in terms of pace this weekend," said Ferrari boss Mattia Binotto. "I am happy with the race but frustrated for the result."



HONE



SBLOXHAM

The first Saudi Arabian Grand Prix was marred by a host of incidents across all the categories that competed on the narrow, high-speed Jeddah Corniche Circuit.

Barriers were damaged in a crash during the second Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East race, while two of the three Formula 2 races were also red-flagged. In the second of those, Enzo Fittipaldi drove unsighted into the stalled Theo Pourchaire at the start of the feature race and, although that was not a result of the circuit design, questions remain about possible chances to warn the drivers about the non-moving ART Grand Prix car as they raced down the pit straight.

In the Formula 1 race, Mick Schumacher became the second driver to have a heavy crash into the barriers at Turn 22 after losing the rear of his Haas in a similar manner to Ferrari's Charles Leclerc in FP2.

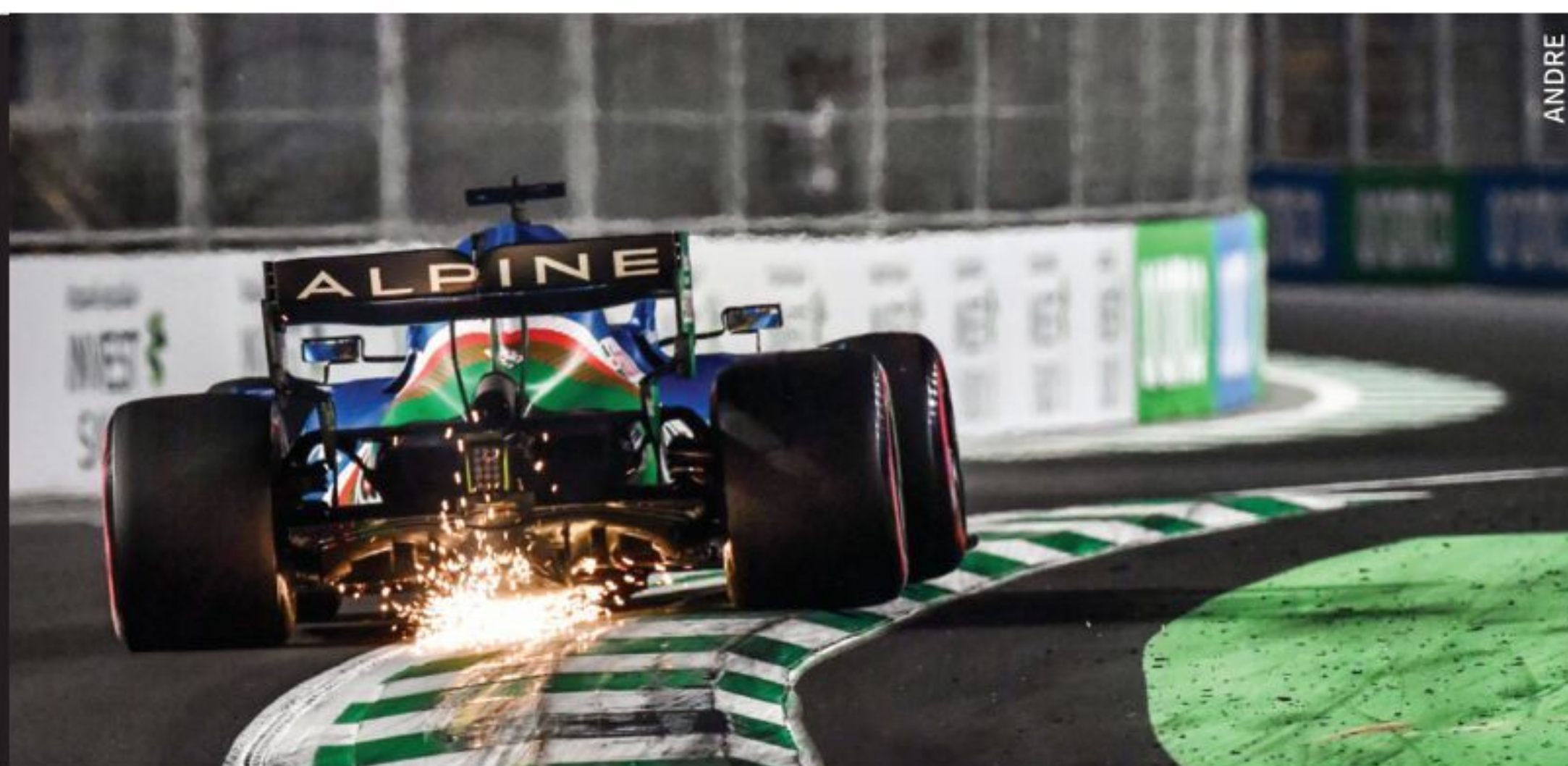
Leclerc was then caught between a wall and Sergio Perez at the restart, which spun the Red Bull around and put Perez out, while George Russell braked in the chaos coming around

Turn 3 in Perez's wake, where the unsighted Nikita Mazepin rear-ended him. Yuki Tsunoda and Sebastian Vettel left a trail of debris at Turn 2 after their clash, which was triggered by the AlphaTauri driver's audacious attack at the end of the high-speed main straight. Then Vettel and Kimi Raikkonen collided trying to go side-by-side into Turn 4. In all, there were two red flags, one safety car period and four virtual safety car activations.

The circuit's design and operations were already under heavy scrutiny for F1 following FP3, where Mazepin nearly rear-ended Lewis Hamilton. The Mercedes driver was touring back to the pits and was unaware of the Haas bearing down on him at Turn 8. Hamilton had earlier passed a double yellow flag LED board activated "accidentally" and "for less than one second," said the stewards, in an incident that was investigated ahead of qualifying. Hamilton was cleared of a breach and only reprimanded for the Mazepin incident, with Mercedes fined €25,000 for not warning him sufficiently.

"NOTHING HAPPENED IN THE END WHICH WAS GOOD"

Fernando Alonso on a race where he was repeatedly passed, spun all by himself and finished a lapped 13th – while also chastising officials on the condition of the circuit during the mid-race debris drama.



ANDRE



Norris hits out at 'stupid' red-flag tyre rules

Lando Norris blasted Formula 1's "stupid" red-flag tyre-change rules after losing out heavily in the first Jeddah race stoppage.

The McLaren driver was running solidly in sixth during the opening phase of the race, then pitted behind Lewis Hamilton, Valtteri Bottas, Charles Leclerc and Sergio Perez at the end of the lap after Mick Schumacher crashed. He emerged in 14th, where he stayed for the second restart when those in front who had not pitted got a 'free' stop under the suspension. He eventually recovered to 10th, despite falling to last when caught behind the second-start pile-up.

"It's just a very unfair rule that should be taken away," said Norris, who also lost ground in similar circumstances at the 2020 Italian and Tuscan GPs. "I think they should change it to one mandatory pitstop with two different tyre sets needed to be used. This just ruins everything."

Gasly and Giovinazzi star amid drama and distractions

By avoiding most of the chaotic scenes in Saudi Arabia, Pierre Gasly finished sixth in Jeddah and guaranteed that this season will provide the biggest points score of his Formula 1 career so far.

After losing positions to Lando Norris and Esteban Ocon at the start, Gasly regained a place when Norris pitted under the initial safety car. Gasly gained further ground when Sergio Perez clashed with Charles Leclerc, leading to the second stoppage. His AlphaTauri then spent the rest of the race in sixth place chasing Daniel Ricciardo. Gasly's eighth top-six result of 2021 means he has reached a century of points for the season,

which was one of his targets.

"Keeping the focus was the most challenging I've ever had – between all the red flags, all the starts, all the VSCs, a lot of distractions," Gasly said. "I don't think our pace was fantastic; we were quite slow in the straights but I'm really happy with the result."

Antonio Giovinazzi bagged his first points since Monaco on his penultimate F1 outing for Alfa Romeo ahead of his Formula E switch. After starting 10th, the Italian held his ground well early on before passing the struggling Ferraris at the third restart. But he was caught by the resurgent red cars to drop to ninth by the end.



Q&A

GEORGE RUSSELL WILLIAMS DRIVER

How are you after such a big hit from behind?

Yeah, totally fine. I mean, it seemed pretty inevitable – you go around a Turn 2 that's fairly wide and open, cars can go side by side, and then it really funnels in and goes pretty narrow, pretty fast. I came around a blind corner – cars were everywhere. I slowed down and then got completely hit from behind. So, a lot to learn for motorsport this



weekend because it's an incredibly exhilarating and exciting track to drive, but it's lacking a lot from a safety perspective and a racing perspective.

There are unnecessary incidents waiting to happen in all of these small blind kinks, which are not even corners in an F1 car, but they just offer unnecessary danger.

Do you think track changes are needed before the next race?

You live and learn from these

experiences. You can't blame anybody for trying to make an incredible race track and ultimately that's what they achieved. But I think nobody foresaw what was about to happen with all of these blind corners. In my opinion, yeah, track changes are needed. You've got so many of these small kinks that are totally unnecessary. And that could all just be made into a straight line from Turns 2-4, and just be straight from Turns 17-22. We've got five corners [at the end of sector two] that are totally easy flat out, even with the DRS. I don't

know what the limitations are, [but] that also needs to be looked at. And ideally, if that was made into a straight line, the safety would drastically improve. I think they've got the resources to do it, so it shouldn't be a limitation. Safety needs to come first.

So, from your perspective it's too dangerous to drive here?

There are unnecessary risks, and those risks can be avoided with some small modifications. So if you can improve the danger drastically with small changes, then it's a no-brainer.

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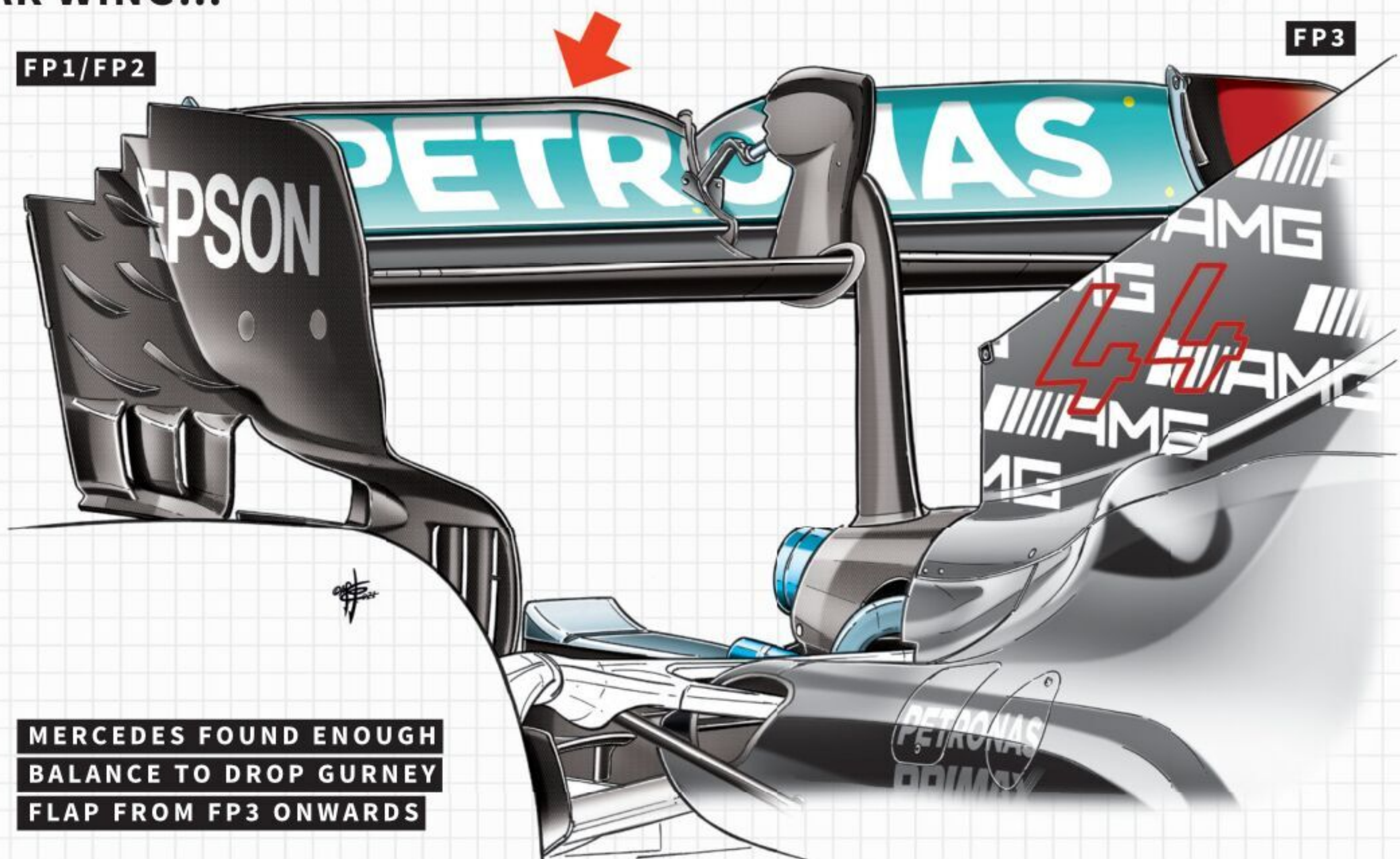
GIORGIO PIOLA

MERCEDES TRIMS REAR WING...

Setting up for the all-new Jeddah circuit gave Formula 1's band of engineers a new challenge. Although it's a high-speed track, the drivers needed downforce to navigate the successions of corners that pervaded the layout.

In the opening practice sessions, Mercedes started with a Gurney flap around the trailing edge of the upper rear-wing plane to add more downforce, at the expense of increased drag. From there, the team began to trim out its aero package and removed the Gurney for FP3, finding enough balance to keep it off the car for the rest of the weekend.

Mercedes trackside engineering director Andrew Shovlin explained the challenge of adapting to the Saudi Arabian GP circuit, calling it "a peculiar circuit, because there are elements that are like a street circuit but you have also got these high-speed sections. It's just like



Monaco sped up, really."

Shovlin also explained that the freshly laid asphalt "gives you quite peculiar behaviour with the tyres", as the surface has had little

chance to rubber in, while the teams also have little information about it to work with. "Getting the car in just the right place was one of the difficult things,"

Shovlin continued. "With a very long lap, you don't end up with many laps of a long run to learn from."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE



...BUT RED BULL GOES EVEN FURTHER

Red Bull, meanwhile, decided to trim its rear-wing geometry back even further for Saudi Arabia, starting off with its medium-high-downforce version in first practice and then taking it down to a lower-downforce variant for the rest of the weekend to find time on the straights. In doing so, it relied more on the diffuser to keep the car glued to the road during the rollercoaster runs of the track.

The shallower wing used from FP2 onwards did employ a Gurney flap just to give it a little bit of extra downforce, and the team also shed its slotted endplates to fit the versions it generally uses on the lower-downforce circuits.

Of course, all of those technical innovations largely pale into irrelevance when you have a twice-red-flagged race, but team principal Christian Horner explained that Red Bull was considerably more race-focused with its approach to set-up. "Obviously we were going for an optimum set-up for the race," he said. "It was a shame with the qualifying not to finish the lap, but then Max was able to readdress that when he did manage to get the lead. Mercedes had an amazing car today and I think the reality was they were just that bit quicker."

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

▲

19 Schumacher #47

1m29.464s

▼

20 Mazepin #9

1m30.473s

▲

18 Stroll #18

1m29.368s

▼

▲

17 Vettel #5

1m29.198s

▼

▲

16 Latifi #6

1m29.177s

▼

▲

15 Sainz #55

1m53.652s

▼

▲

14 Russell #63

1m29.054s

▼

▲

13 Alonso #14

1m28.920s

▼

▲

12 Raikkonen #7

1m28.885s

▼

▲

11 Ricciardo #3

1m28.668s

▼

FREE PRACTICE 1			FREE PRACTICE 2			FREE PRACTICE 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m29.786s	1	Hamilton	1m29.018s	1	Verstappen	1m28.100s
2	Verstappen	1m29.842s	2	Bottas	1m29.079s	2	Hamilton	1m28.314s
3	Bottas	1m30.009s	3	Gasly	1m29.099s	3	Perez	1m28.629s
4	Gasly	1m30.263s	4	Verstappen	1m29.213s	4	Tsunoda	1m28.641s
5	Giovinazzi	1m30.318s	5	Alonso	1m29.441s	5	Gasly	1m28.715s
6	Sainz	1m30.564s	6	Ocon	1m29.555s	6	Bottas	1m29.019s
7	Leclerc	1m30.600s	7	Sainz	1m29.589s	7	Leclerc	1m29.101s
8	Ricciardo	1m30.608s	8	Tsunoda	1m29.597s	8	Sainz	1m29.149s
9	Alonso	1m30.842s	9	Perez	1m29.768s	9	Ocon	1m29.177s
10	Vettel	1m30.886s	10	Leclerc	1m29.772s	10	Norris	1m29.300s
11	Perez	1m30.960s	11	Ricciardo	1m29.968s	11	Alonso	1m29.418s
12	Ocon	1m31.023s	12	Norris	1m30.004s	12	Giovinazzi	1m29.590s
13	Norris	1m31.029s	13	Giovinazzi	1m30.110s	13	Raikkonen	1m29.689s
14	Stroll	1m31.044s	14	Raikkonen	1m30.276s	14	Ricciardo	1m29.717s
15	Tsunoda	1m31.099s	15	Stroll	1m30.442s	15	Stroll	1m30.030s
16	Raikkonen	1m31.296s	16	Vettel	1m30.502s	16	Russell	1m30.034s
17	Russell	1m31.343s	17	Russell	1m30.506s	17	Vettel	1m30.296s
18	Schumacher	1m31.525s	18	Schumacher	1m30.652s	18	Latifi	1m30.366s
19	Latifi	1m31.821s	19	Latifi	1m31.039s	19	Schumacher	1m30.933s
20	Mazepin	1m33.464s	20	Mazepin	1m31.629s	20	Mazepin	1m30.979s

WEATHER

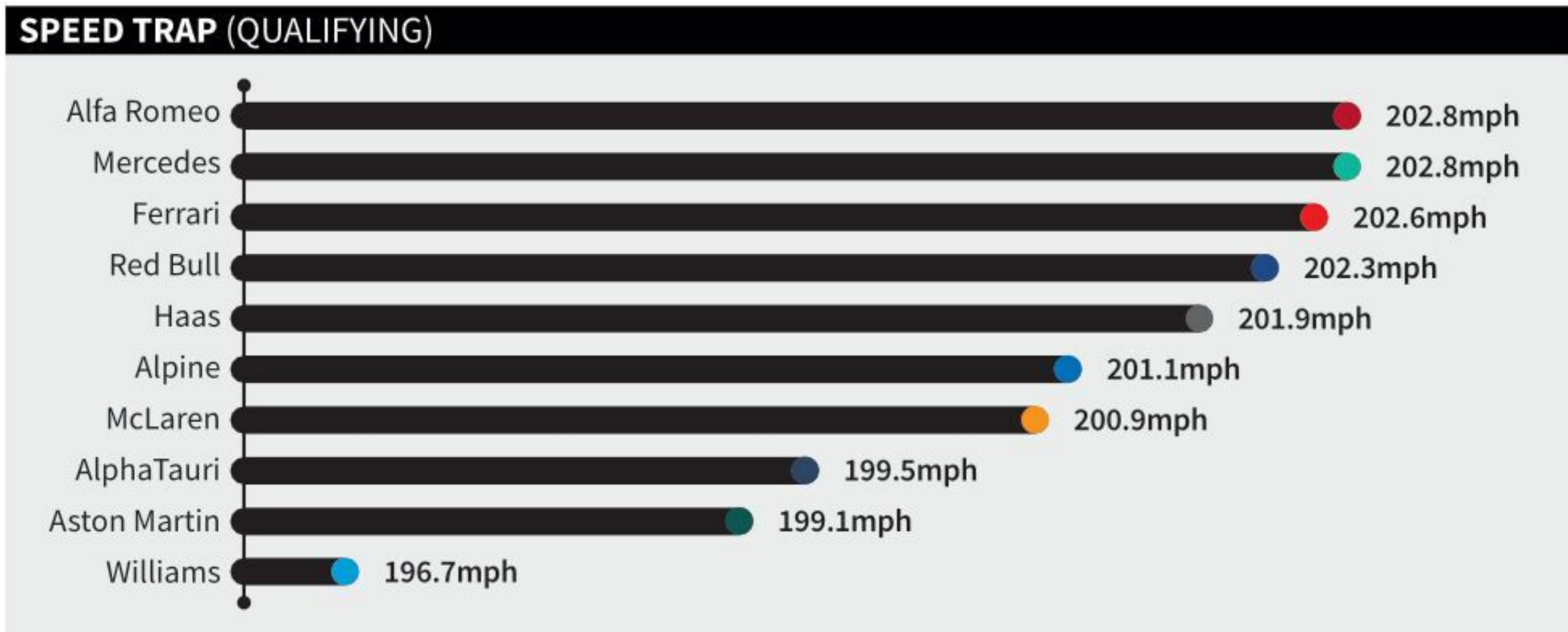
Sunny, air 28-29C track 33-36C

WEATHER

Night, air 28-29C track 28-29C

WEATHER

Sunset, air 28-29C track 32-35C



QUALIFYING 1			QUALIFYING 2			QUALIFYING 3		
POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME	POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Perez	1m28.021s	1	Hamilton	1m27.712s	1	Hamilton	1m27.511s
2	Bottas	1m28.057s	2	Perez	1m27.946s	2	Bottas	1m27.622s
3	Ricciardo	1m28.216s	3	Verstappen	1m27.953s	3	Verstappen	1m27.653s
4	Sainz	1m28.237s	4	Bottas	1m28.054s	4	Leclerc	1m28.054s
5	Verstappen	1m28.285s	5	Tsunoda	1m28.222s	5	Perez	1m28.123s
6	Leclerc	1m28.310s	6	Gasly	1m28.314s	6	Gasly	1m28.125s
7	Norris	1m28.338s	7	Norris	1m28.344s	7	Norris	1m28.180s
8	Gasly	1m28.401s	8	Leclerc	1m28.459s	8	Tsunoda	1m28.442s
9	Hamilton	1m28.466s	9	Ocon	1m28.574s	9	Ocon	1m28.647s
10	Tsunoda	1m28.503s	10	Giovinazzi	1m28.616s	10	Giovinazzi	1m28.754s
11	Ocon	1m28.752s	11	Ricciardo	1m28.668s			
12	Raikkonen	1m28.856s	12	Raikkonen	1m28.885s			
13	Giovinazzi	1m28.899s	13	Alonso	1m28.920s			
14	Russell	1m28.926s	14	Russell	1m29.054s			
15	Alonso	1m28.944s	15	Sainz	1m53.652s			
16	Latifi	1m29.177s						
17	Vettel	1m29.198s						
18	Stroll	1m29.368s						
19	Schumacher	1m29.464s						
20	Mazepin	1m30.473s						

WEATHER

Night, air 28C track 29-31C

NEXT RACE

12 DECEMBER

ABU DHABI GP

Yas Marina

SEASON STATS			
DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	369.5	1	1
2 Hamilton	369.5	1	1
3 Bottas	218	1	1
4 Perez	190	1	2
5 Leclerc	158	2	1
6 Norris	154	2	1
7 Sainz	149.5	2	2
8 Ricciardo	115	1	4
9 Gasly	100	3	4
10 Alonso	77	3	5
11 Ocon	72	1	5
12 Vettel	43	2	5
13 Stroll	34	6	8
14 Tsunoda	20	6	7
15 Russell	16	2	2
16 Raikkonen	10	8	12
17 Latifi	7	7	12
18 Giovinazzi	3	9	7
19 Schumacher	0	12	14
20 Kubica	0	14	18
21 Mazepin	0	14	18

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP		
1 Mercedes		587.5
2 Red Bull		559.5
3 Ferrari		307.5
4 McLaren		269
5 Alpine		149
6 AlphaTauri		120
7 Aston Martin		77
8 Williams		23
9 Alfa Romeo		13
10 Haas		0

QUALIFYING BATTLE			
Hamilton	15	5	Bottas
Perez	1	19	Verstappen
Ricciardo	6	14	Norris
Vettel	14	7	Stroll
Alonso	11	9	Ocon
Leclerc	13	7	Sainz
Gasly	20	0	Tsunoda
Raikkonen	7	12	Giovinazzi
Kubica	0	2	Giovinazzi
Mazepin	2	19	Schumacher
Latifi	1	19	Russell

Based on Q1/Q2/Q3 sessions, not sprint races. Events removed when one driver in a team could not record a representative time for reasons outside their control

WINS		POLE POSITIONS	
Verstappen	9	Verstappen	8
Hamilton	8	Hamilton	7
Bottas	1	Bottas	3
Ocon	1	Leclerc	2
Perez	1	Norris	1
Ricciardo	1		

Poles taken based on qualifying, not sprint races (official F1 scores would be Verstappen 9, Hamilton 5, Bottas 4)

STARTING GRID

 10 Giovinazzi #99 1m28.754s	 9 Ocon #31 1m28.647s	 8 Tsunoda #22 1m28.442s	 7 Norris #4 1m28.180s	 6 Gasly #10 1m28.125s	 5 Perez #11 1m28.123s	 4 Leclerc #16 1m28.054s	 3 Verstappen #33 1m27.653s	 2 Bottas #77 1m27.622s	 1 Hamilton #44 1m27.511s
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RACE RESULTS ROUND 21/22 (50 LAPS - 191.66 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	2h06m15.118s	18	Mu, Hn
2	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	+21.825s	31	Mu, Hn, Mn
3	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	+27.531s		Mu, Hn, Mu
4	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	+27.633s	1	Mu, Hn
5	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	+40.121s		Hn, Mn
6	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+41.613s		Mu, Hn
7	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+44.475s		Mu, Hn
8	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	Ferrari	+46.606s		Hn, Mu
9	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	+58.505s		Mu, Hn
10	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	+1m01.358s		Su, Hn
11	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	+1m17.212s		Mn, Hu, Mu
12	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	+1m23.249s		Mn, Hn, Mn, Hu
13	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap/+23.581s		Mn, Hn, Sn
14	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda	-1 lap/+28.281s		Mu, Hn, Mu, Hu
15	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+38.360s		Mn, Hn, Mu
R	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	44 laps-accident damage		Hu, Mu, Mu
R	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda	14 laps-accident		Mu, Hn, Mn
R	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Haas-Ferrari	14 laps-accident		Mn, Hn
R	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	14 laps-accident		Mn, Hn
R	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	8 laps-accident		Mn

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Hamilton	1m30.734s	-	47
2	Bottas	1m31.408s	+0.674s	47
3	Verstappen	1m31.488s	+0.754s	35
4	Leclerc	1m31.601s	+0.867s	46
5	Alonso	1m31.633s	+0.899s	46
6	Ocon	1m31.797s	+1.063s	47
7	Sainz	1m31.851s	+1.117s	37
8	Norris	1m31.914s	+1.180s	49
9	Gasly	1m32.297s	+1.563s	46
10	Tsunoda	1m32.506s	+1.772s	44
11	Ricciardo	1m32.716s	+1.982s	43
12	Latifi	1m32.751s	+2.017s	49
13	Raikkonen	1m32.778s	+2.044s	45
14	Stroll	1m32.804s	+2.070s	45
15	Giovinazzi	1m32.865s	+2.131s	37
16	Vettel	1m34.030s	+3.296s	41
17	Perez	1m34.138s	+3.404s	9
18	Schumacher	1m36.043s	+5.309s	8
19	Russell	1m36.130s	+5.396s	7
20	Mazepin	1m37.043s	+6.309s	7

WEATHER Night, clear, air 28-29C track 30-32C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 91.085mph **FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED** 152.212mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

RACE PENALTIES

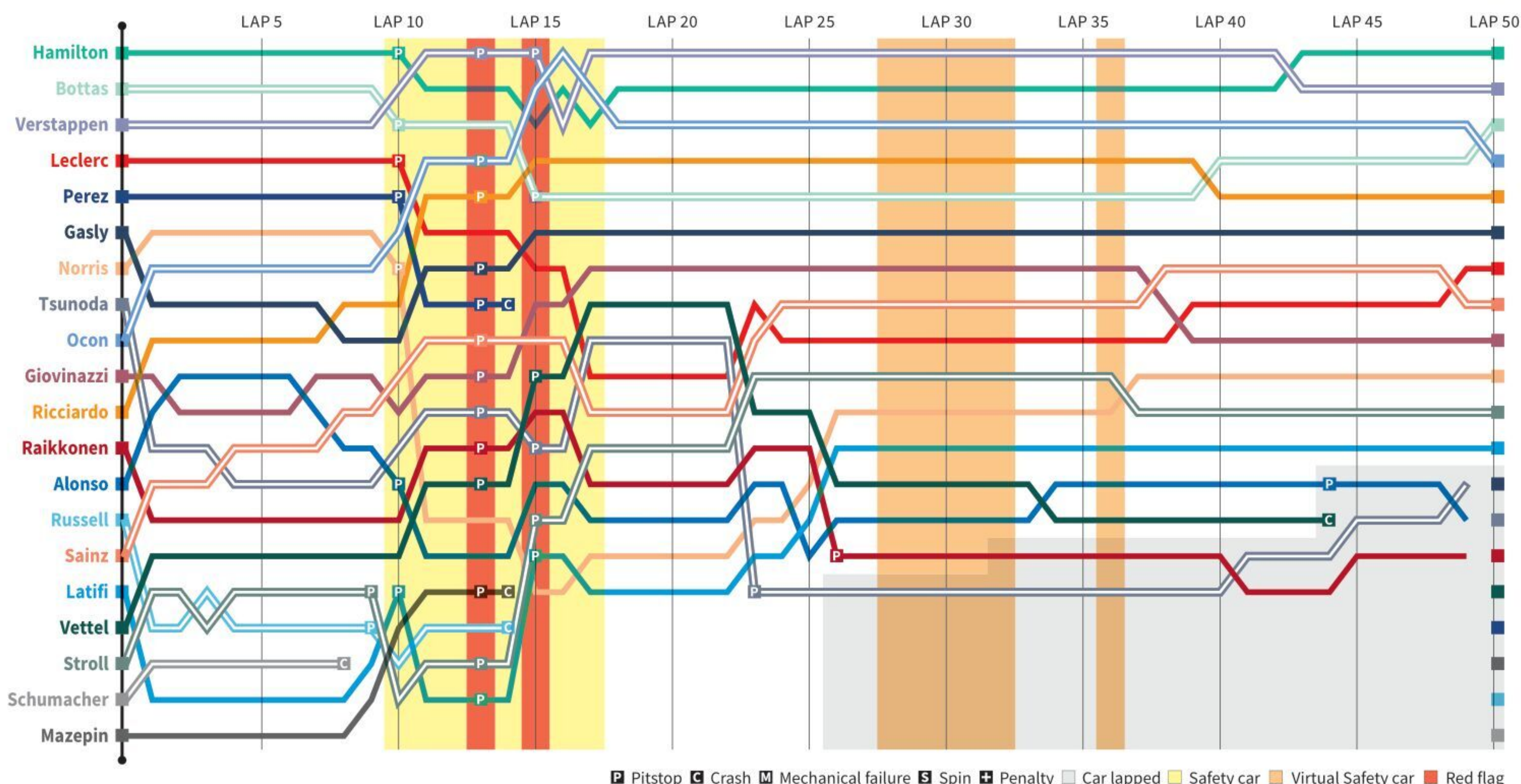
TSUNODA Five-second penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Vettel
VERSTAPPEN 5s penalty and one licence point for leaving the track and gaining an unfair advantage
VERSTAPPEN 10s penalty and two licence points for causing a collision with Hamilton

STAT

1974

The only other time two F1 title contenders - Emerson Fittipaldi and Clay Regazzoni - went into the final round level on points

LAP CHART What happened, when



P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin + Penalty L Car lapped Safety car Virtual Safety car Red flag

VERSTAPPEN BOTTOMS OUT AFTER LOW BLOWS

Red Bull's star driver didn't cover himself in glory in Jeddah, but Ocon shone for Alpine and Giovinazzi impressed in his penultimate grand prix

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

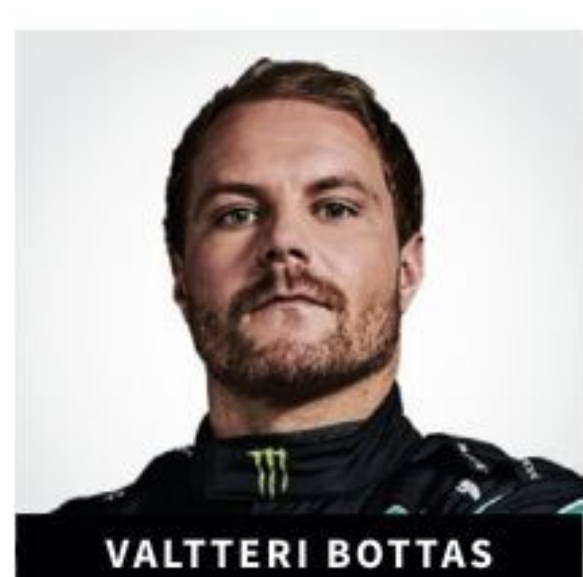
MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **1st** — Result **1st**

8 Kept calm for a last run in Q3 to improve, having been ragged before, and claimed pole. Had strong pace early on, then caught up in every incident that followed. Played a part in the Turn 27 crash as he could have gone past Verstappen earlier. Fastest lap with a broken front wing was impressive.

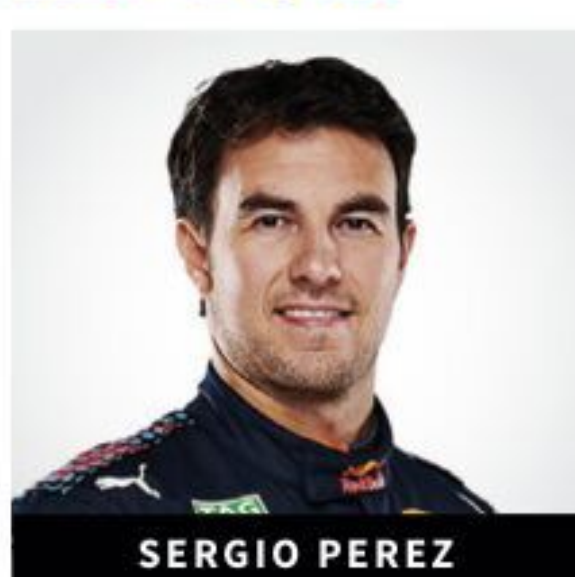


VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **2nd** — Result **3rd**

6 Did well to hold off Verstappen at the first start. His safety car in-lap wasn't on, but the red flag made it irrelevant. Locked up at second start, nearly wiped out Verstappen, and fell behind Ocon and Ricciardo when team needed him the most up front. Recovered to the podium with a nice late charge.

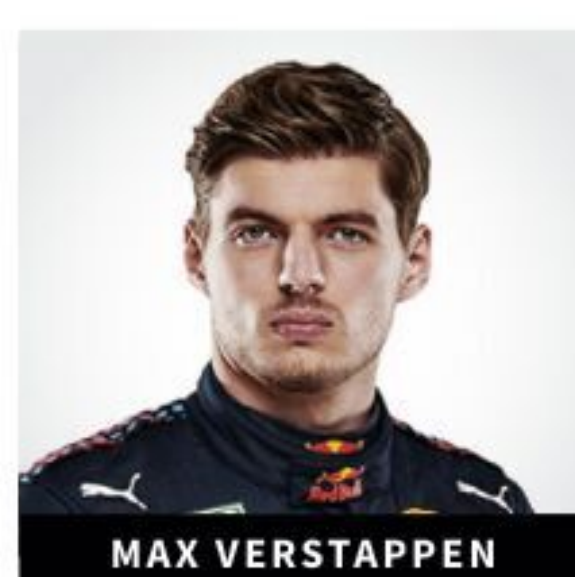
RED BULL



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **5th** — Result **R**

5 Qualified behind Leclerc, which once again meant he was absent from the lead fight. Had a good go at passing Leclerc at first start, but ended up nearly tagging his team-mate. At the second start, should have known Leclerc was still to his left at the Turn 3 wall; had room to go right.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **3rd** — Result **2nd**

3 Q3 crash was a 'massive error' so he can't score higher, especially as he then repeatedly pulled bolshy race passes off-track and drew a penalty. Penalised again for Hamilton crash and score comes down further, but it's bumped back up by borderline-legal second-start double pass.

McLAREN



DANIEL RICCIARDO

Started **11th** — Result **5th**

8 Made 11th-place exit in Q2 due to damaging his car on a kerb. Very fortunate with the safety car turning into a stoppage after not pitting in first stint, but had to take the less durable medium tyres for restart and run them to the end, during which he defied a Mercedes for 23 laps with strong battle skill.

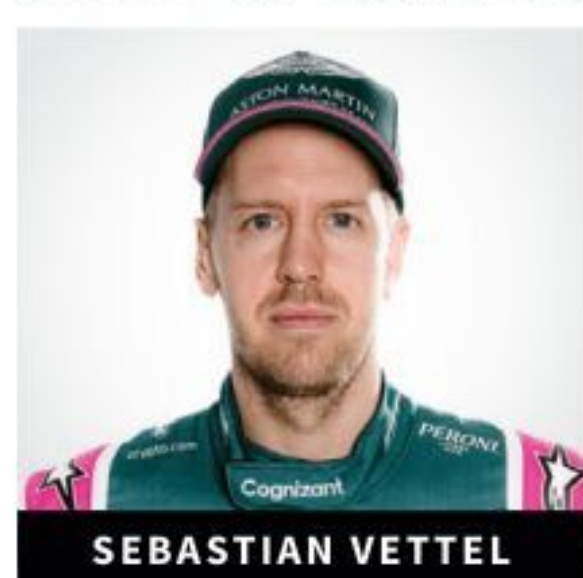


LANDO NORRIS

Started **7th** — Result **10th**

7 Edged out by Gasly in Q3 after backing off in the wake of an error at Turn 22. Ran sixth before the first red flag; dropped to 14th as a safety car pitter. Braking early at second start put Alonso ahead, and bad luck behind Perez's shunt dropped him to last. Rose to 10th as rivals fell away or crashed ahead.

ASTON MARTIN



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Started **17th** — Result **R**

6 Lead Aston in qualifying but still knocked out in Q1 by Russell's slower Williams. Pleased with his progress in the three starts, but undone by Tsunoda's assault, which dropped him back to Raikkonen. Shares some blame for clash but is correct that the Finn should have backed out earlier.



LANCE STROLL

Started **18th** — Result **11th**

6 Rued the traffic chaos in Q1 as he missed being on a hot lap when track was at its best. Lucky that cutting Turn 8 on lap one while passing Russell wasn't penalised, but rose up with strong third start and Tsunoda knocking Vettel around. Lost out to Norris's McLaren in the closing stages and was swiftly dropped.

ALPINE



FERNANDO ALONSO

Started **13th** — Result **13th**

5 Dropped out in Q2. In first start saw off Tsunoda and got past Giovinazzi, but was shuffled back in the DRS train during first stint, then lost out when Raikkonen and Vettel didn't pit under the safety car. Spun by himself on lap 25 and dropped behind Norris and Latifi; lucky not to be collected.



ESTEBAN OCON

Started **9th** — Result **4th**

9 Made Q3 well and survived Tsunoda driving into his left-hand side at the first start. Didn't pit under the safety car, so started from pole after title contenders clashed. Was never going to hold them back, but might have deployed his battery energy better as Bottas loomed at the end.

FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **4th** — Result **7th**

8 Superb in qualifying. Held off Perez in first stint, then lost out by pitting under safety car. Blameless in their crash, but at third start struggled on cold, flatspotted tyres. Obeyed instruction to let Sainz by under VSC after tough Turn 1 defence. Repassed with a late surge in the closing stages.



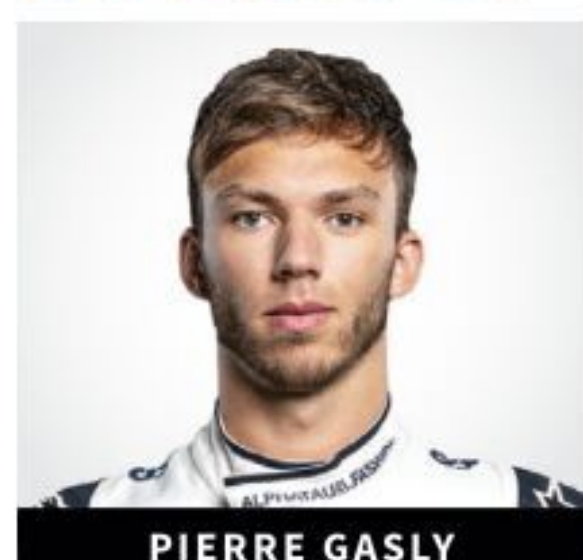
CARLOS SAINZ JR

Started **15th** — Result **8th**

7 Not adjusting his car balance correctly led to Q2 half-spin and light damage. Passed Russell into Turn 1 at the first start, then held position through next two starts after gaining by not pitting pre-stoppage. Led Leclerc up the order in the main second stint with strong pace on ageing mediums.



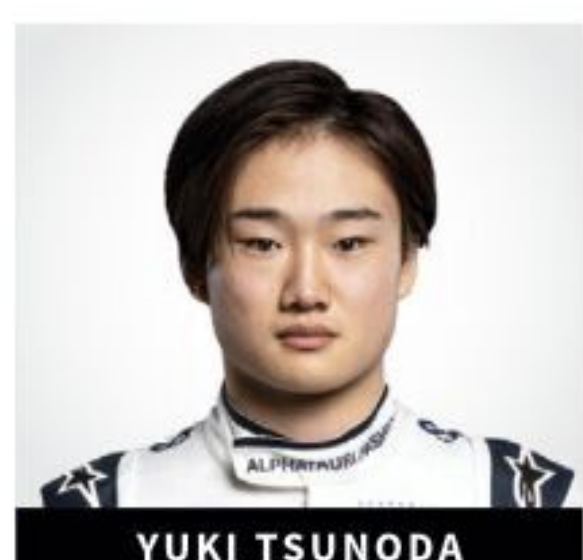
ALPHATAURI



PIERRE GASLY

Started **6th** — Result **6th**

8 Qualified just 0.002s slower than Perez. At the first start lost out to Ocon, and was passed by Ricciardo before Schumacher crashed. Gained as a safety car/red flag non-pitter, and at second start missed the Perez melee. Dropped Giovinazzi after third start and beat the Ferraris.



YUKI TSUNODA

Started **8th** — Result **14th**

4 Qualifying was the highlight as he reached Q3. He thoughtlessly moved over on Ocon at the start, then lost out fighting Alonso. Dropped another spot in the second-start chaos, then gained good ground at third start. Later made a rash, outside-line attack on Vettel and was rightly penalised.

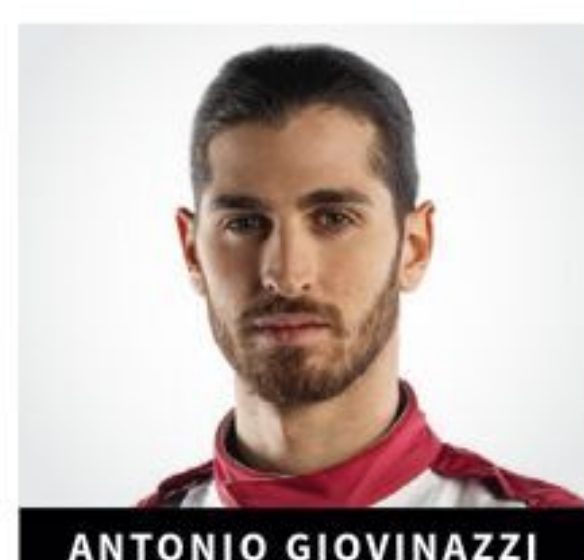
ALFA ROMEO



KIMI RAIKKONEN

Started **12th** — Result **15th**

6 Q2 elimination error was opting to go back to the soft tyres. In the race slipped back at the first start before gaining ground by not pitting in opening stint, then at third start let himself get swamped and dropped behind Stroll. Race was wrecked in the risky outside-line clash with Vettel.

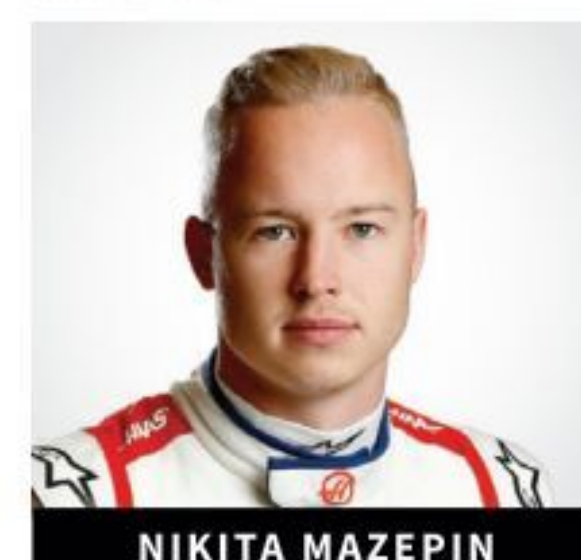


ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

Started **10th** — Result **9th**

9 A Turn 17 Q2 wall-kiss isn't penalised as he made Q3. But a lurid slide out of Turn 27 on lap one is, since Alonso got past. Soon repassed him, then got fellow red-flag gainer Sainz at second start. Turn 4 off after restart didn't cost a spot after he'd nipped past Leclerc. Fell behind faster Ferraris late on.

HAAS



NIKITA MAZEPIN

Started **20th** — Result **R**

5 The one-second qualifying gap to his team-mate is the main reason for this score, blamed on traffic chaos at the final corners late in Q1. In the race he ran last before gaining when the Williamses and Stroll stopped under the safety car. Raced Stroll on the second start; was unsighted when Russell braked.

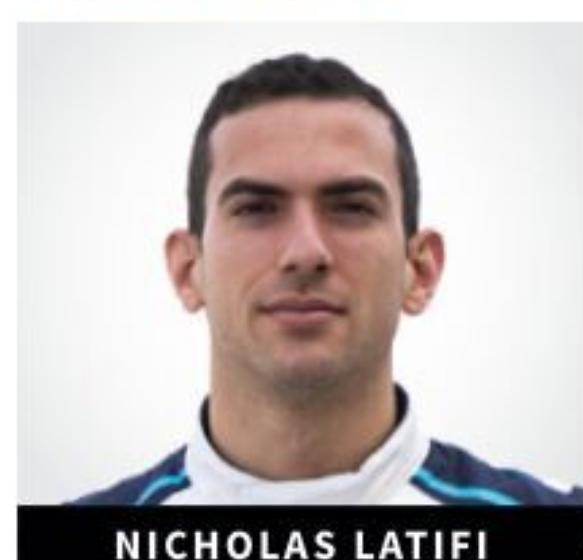


MICK SCHUMACHER

Started **19th** — Result **R**

5 Lead Haas driver yet again in qualifying, but felt that had he activated his DRS on time in the final zone on his last Q1 lap he might have beaten Stroll. His score comes down because of his crash, caused by pushing too hard to get back into Russell's DRS range. Caught out at tricky Turn 22.

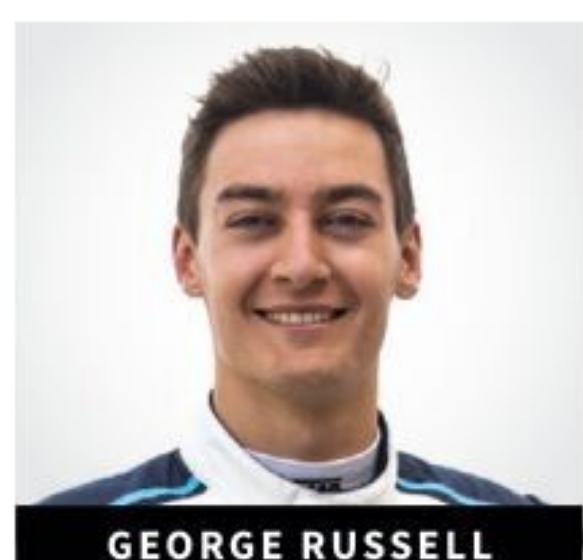
WILLIAMS



NICHOLAS LATIFI

Started **16th** — Result **12th**

6 Ran wide at Turn 4 on his first Q1 run, so missed a late effort when track improved. In the race, saved a massive slide running behind Schumacher just before the Haas went off, then impressed staying out of trouble through various starts. Displayed strong pace on the hard tyres while ahead of Alonso.

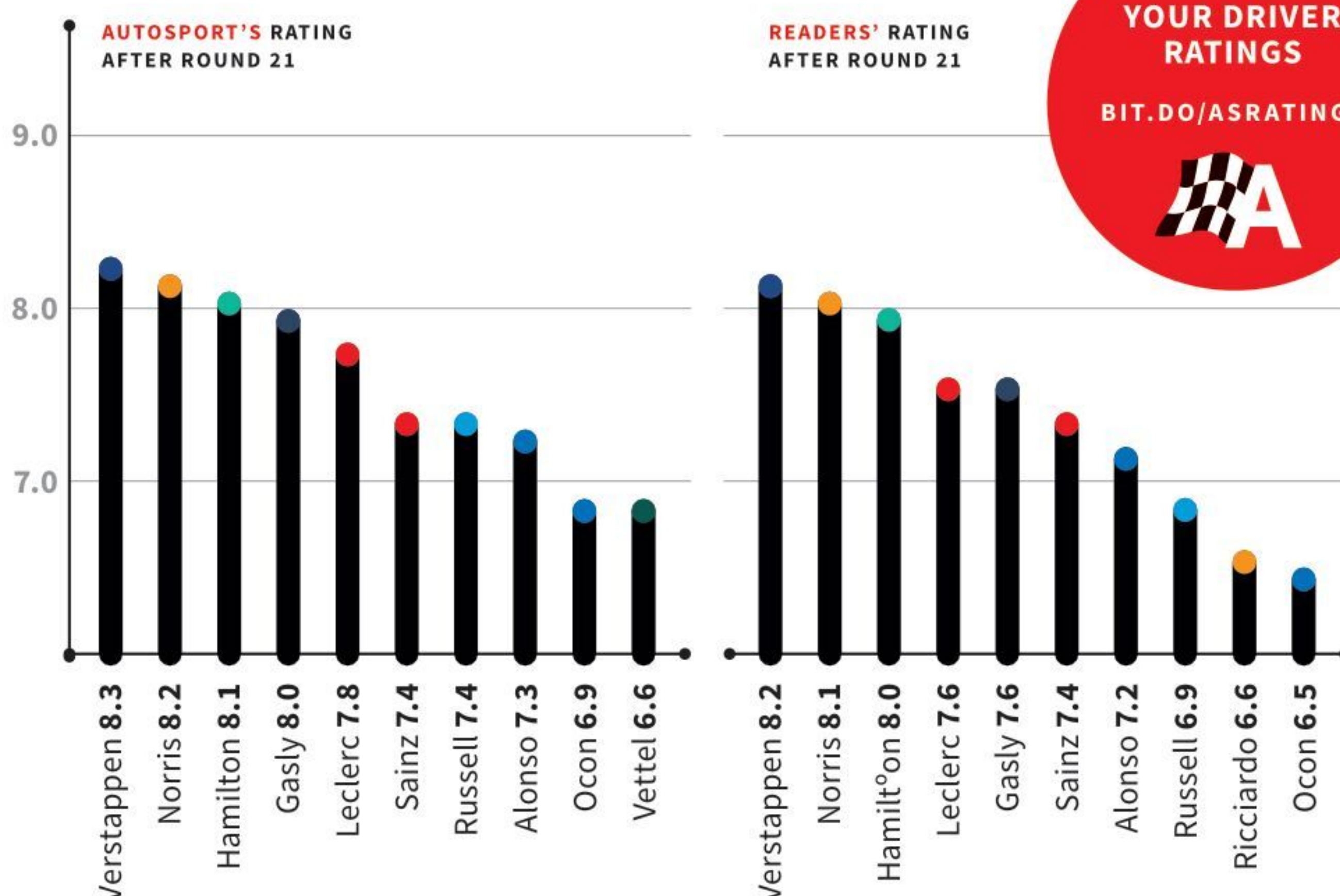


GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **14th** — Result **R**

7 Put in another strong qualifying display and ran as expected in the opening stint. At the first start, slipped behind Sainz and lost momentum braking for the Ferrari coming back from a Turn 4 off, which let in the Astons. At the second start, had to back off in Perez chaos and was rear-ended by Mazepin.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS



Mount Panorama pace lifts Holden duo to the summit

A tyre scare and being outdragged from pole kept it interesting, but no one could find an answer to Mostert and Holdsworth's brilliance at Bathurst

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN

PHOTOGRAPHY MARK HORSBURGH



motorsport
IMAGES



Rapid
Holdsworth (left)
and Mostert gave
WAU an eighth
Bathurst win

Outright car speed trumped everything else at Mount Panorama as Chaz Mostert and Lee Holdsworth took a popular Bathurst 1000 win.

The lead Walkinshaw Andretti United entry arrived in Bathurst among the pre-race contenders but was by no means the clear favourite. There were no question marks over the driver pairing, with Holdsworth just a year out of a full-time seat. Car pace, however, was tough to predict. On one hand, Mostert was reasonably quick (although not the quickest) during the sprint round in Bathurst back in February. On the other, the #25 Holden Commodore ZB was horribly inconsistent across the four Sydney Motorsport Park rounds last month.

But in the end, it was pure pace – the margin of which over the rest of the field was frankly staggering – that won Mostert and Holdsworth the Great Race.

From the moment the car rolled out of the truck on Thursday it looked sharp. In the opening hour-long practice session Mostert was just 0.08 seconds short of outright pacesetter Cam Waters. In second practice, reserved for co-drivers only, Holdsworth was fastest and barely 0.1s slower than Mostert in the earlier session.

Third place in practice three, 0.2s off Waters, was as bad as it got for the #25 all weekend. In the fourth practice Mostert was fastest and in Friday qualifying, he was third – 0.08s off provisional pole winner Will Brown, in a ridiculously tight session.

The trend was obvious, particularly when Holdsworth and Mostert topped the two Saturday practice sessions. But the car's pace advantage wasn't made clear until the Top 10 Shootout on Saturday evening



Waters' wall-banging quali lap looked spectacular as he ran to third on the grid

The speed was red hot in one of the most thrilling Shootouts in recent memory as five drivers broke the 2m04s barrier. The first was Brodie Kostecki, a wild lap typical of his limit-defying driving style yielding a 2m03.773s. On his cool-down lap he told the broadcast, "I couldn't give a shit if anyone beats me, that was awesome."

And beaten he was. On the very next lap Cam Waters bounced off the wall at The Cutting, bounced off the wall between Reid and McPhillamy Parks, locked his rears into Forrest's Elbow and then stopped the clocks at 2m03.686s.

Next up was Mostert. Unlike Kostecki and Waters, Mostert's lap was clean. So clean that, until he reached the end of the first sector, it almost looked slow. But it wasn't. He was 0.1s up on Waters in the first sector, nearly 0.3s up in the second and crossed the line in a remarkable 2m03.3736s to become the fastest driver ever around Mount Panorama in a Supercar. The time didn't just beat Scott McLaughlin's practice record (2m03.481s), but even pipped the McLaughlin Shootout lap from 2019

(2m03.378s) that was later scrubbed when his engine failed post-event checks.

Anton De Pasquale did his best to run down Mostert's record-breaker but fell nearly 0.3s short. Brown's 2m03.992s, what would usually be considered a pretty handy time, was just fifth fastest. Things would get worse for Brown in the hours that followed the Shootout when both Erebus cars were disqualified after scrutineering (see below).

Mostert's post-session comments were telling as he bandied about terms such as "effortless" and compared his Commodore to a GT car. "It's funny, the car is so smooth to drive," he said when asked if this was his best-ever lap. "Through the Cutting, I felt like I was in a GT3 car. It floated across the top. It picked up grip. It's so fun. I can't put [the lap] into words. When you've got such a good car underneath you, it kind of becomes effortless. You still make sure you hit all your markers, but your margins are opened up and you just flow the speed."

Come Sunday morning it was clear that it was going to take something out of the ordinary – a mechanical failure, a crash, a strategic curveball – to stop the #25. But even then, the car's sheer pace advantage over the field took everybody by surprise.

Like most, WAU opted to start its co-driver in its lead entry. But the start proved to be a tiny (and solitary) blot on Holdsworth's copybook as he was outdragged to the first corner by Tony D'Alberto in the #11 Dick Johnson Racing Ford Mustang. D'Alberto's lead was short-lived as Holdsworth followed the Shell-backed Ford into the Chase at the end of lap one. A healthy dose of aero wash carried him wide through the right-hand kink. That accidentally set him up for a pass into the sharp left-hander. Holdsworth then

>>

EREBUS BEAT SLIDING DOORS QUALI PENALTY

The Mountain sent Erebus Motorsport on a rollercoaster ride across the 2021 Bathurst 1000 weekend.

The underdog Holden squad continued its late-season run of incredible form by getting both its cars into the Top 10 Shootout, with Will Brown even taking provisional pole.

Brodie Kostecki and Brown both dipped into the 'threes' in the thrilling single-lap dash for pole, with Kostecki qualifying fourth and Brown fifth.

But those positions were short-lived. Post-qualifying scrutineering revealed the doors on both cars were slightly underweight, even if the cars themselves were over the minimum limit. "After thorough inspection it was found that although the overall car weights were by the book, doors on both Erebus



Holdens were underweight," read a statement from the team. "It is a small oversight and honest mistake by the crew who have worked tirelessly for six weeks to ensure they represented the team, its partners and its fans well."

As a result, both Kostecki/David Russell and

Brown/Jack Perkins were rubbed from the session and bumped back to the fifth row of the grid.

Things didn't get much better for Brown and Perkins. The pair were sitting comfortably in the top 10 when their Commodore's power steering let go – the repairs leaving them 11 laps down. There were early concerns for the Kostecki/Russell car as well, as a long brake pedal forced Erebus into an additional pad and rotor change outside of the window.

However, from there it was smooth sailing. Kostecki's mid-race move inside Cam Waters over the top of the mountain was one of the highlights of the race. Waters got back past during the final round of stops but thanks to Shane van Gisbergen's late tyre failure, Kostecki and Russell (above) still completed the podium.

pulled a handy 6s gap over Triple Eight's Garth Tander during a double stint, before handing the car over to Mostert on lap 37.

As the race neared its 50th tour, Mostert was well in control. Until a chunk of Dunlop rubber departed his left-rear tyre as he crested Skyline. Luckily the tyre maintained its integrity and didn't fire him off the road and Mostert was able to carefully crawl back to the pits for an unscheduled stop.

He lost time and the car's strategy was compromised. But it was nothing insurmountable — providing it didn't become a recurring issue. Dunlop's Supercars boss Kevin Fitzsimons joined the WAU crew in inspecting the delaminated tyre in the garage. Fears of car set-up being the issue were allayed by a straight cut,

“After last year, I'll take a Bathurst win over sitting in a half-average car”

a tell-tale sign of a run-in with debris. The instruction to both Mostert and Holdsworth was to keep the car off the kerbs, just as a precaution. But apart from that, the fightback was on.

Through nothing but pure pace Mostert was able to drag the car back into contention, although being out of sync with the next-best car, the Shane van Gisbergen/Tander #888, meant the lead ebbed and flowed between the two.

On lap 60 Holdsworth jumped back into the car, putting in a flawless two stints to cap off the car's recovery from the tyre issue. His speed meant WAU could leave him in the car longer than required by the rules to help find a better strategic window.

The opportunity for Holdsworth's final stop came in the most unusual of circumstances shortly after the 100-lap mark — a safety car to help a lost echidna off the circuit.

Mostert resumed in a Triple Eight sandwich, behind van Gisbergen and ahead of Jamie Whincup, behind the safety car.



D'Alberto, sharing the DJR Mustang with De Pasquale, leapfrogged Holdsworth into the first corner

And when the race went green van Gisbergen did his best to use the two-against-one situation to his advantage. When Mostert got a run on #888 up Mountain Straight on the second green lap, van Gisbergen responded by first hanging Mostert wide on the way out of Griffins and then slowing into the Cutting. Whincup snuck by a delayed Mostert as did De Pasquale in a thrilling battle. Mostert suddenly found himself fourth, but more encouraged than ever that he was in a winning position. Mostert knew that if van Gisbergen was racing him that hard, with so many laps to go, he was clearly worried about the speed of that Walkinshaw Commodore.

Mostert had just worked his way back past De Pasquale into third when Jayden Ojeda hit the wall to spark another safety car. The pitlane lit up, Whincup the big loser as he stacked behind van Gisbergen, while Mostert short-filled to jump both T8 cars. The race was only briefly green before another safety car was called when Jake Kosteki nosed into the fence at the Elbow.

The next restart was lap 125 and Mostert put in a blistering stint to gap van Gisbergen. He lowered the fastest lap several times as he stretched away to around 5s before taking his final service on lap 138 of 161. The pressure on van Gisbergen to respond was obvious when he almost crashed into pit entry on his way in a lap later.

There were two more safety cars and two more restarts, but van Gisbergen didn't have an answer for Mostert. Seven laps from home the full stop was put on the battle when van Gisbergen's right-front tyre let go, a symptom of how hard he was pushing.

That sealed the race for Mostert, who claimed his second Great Race triumph, and Holdsworth who became a first-time Bathurst champion. “Honestly, I don't know how [the team] gave us such a good car,” said an emotional Holdsworth, who lost his full-time Tickford ride at the end of 2020.

“Mind-blowing. I'm just glad that we took it to the end, and we got our trophy.

“To bounce back after my last year... it wasn't the best way to end [my full-time career]. But I'll take a Bathurst victory over sitting in a half-average car for a year.”

It was WAU's eighth Bathurst crown and first since Tander and Nick Percat in Holden Racing Team colours in 2011.

Van Gisbergen's late failure handed second to Waters and James Moffat, after a neat battle with the Brodie Kosteki/David Russell Erebus Holden.

Kosteki had snuck past Waters during the frantic post-echidna restart with a remarkable move up the inside on the way to the Metal Grate with two wheels on the grass. But Waters was able to jump Kosteki during the final round of stops. ❧



Van Gisbergen gave a valiant chase but ultimately he had no match for Mostert's speed

RECORD-SETTER WHINCUP'S CALCULATED FULL-TIME FAREWELL

Jamie Whincup's remarkable, record-breaking full-time Supercars career came to an end with a fourth place finish in the Bathurst 1000.

Whincup and co-driver Craig Lowndes were never quite in the hunt for a fairytale victory, at least based on outright pace. There was little in the way of heroics during practice, before Whincup made the wrong sort of headlines when he missed out on a Top 10 Shootout spot in Friday evening's qualifying.

Starting from 11th, the pair had a mostly trouble-free Sunday. But being behind the sister Triple Eight machine of Shane van Gisbergen/Garth Tander on the road meant stacking was unavoidable, while Whincup later admitted he didn't want to risk a safe fourth place chasing a podium late in the race.

"It was only starting to sink in on



the last few laps that this would be the last time I'd be in a Supercar as a full-time driver," said Whincup. "That heavy-hearted feeling definitely started to settle in.

"We fought hard to get a podium today, but it just wasn't meant to be. The young kids were racing

hard, and I knew what I had to do to get past them, but I couldn't fully commit and trust myself to have a red-hot crack. I didn't want to race the last 20 laps running the wall every lap and really taking risks, I didn't want to take that chance."

But Whincup didn't leave

Bathurst empty-handed. On the Saturday he was awarded the 2021 Barry Sheene Medal – Supercars' answer to a 'Best and Fairest'. And on Sunday before the start Prime Minister Scott Morrison (image, far right) announced Whincup has been inducted into the Supercars Hall of Fame.

He retires with seven Supercars titles, 124 race wins, 237 podiums and 92 poles – all of them category records. He has also won the Bathurst 1000 four times.

He may add to that Bathurst record in the future, too. Whincup is expected to return next year as one of Triple Eight's co-drivers alongside either van Gisbergen or new signing Broc Feeney.

As for his day job, Whincup will now take over from Roland Dane as the squad's managing director.

RESULTS BATHURST 1000, AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS ROUND 12/12, MOUNT PANORAMA (AUS), 5 DECEMBER (161 LAPS – 621.553 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM/CAR	TIME
1	Chaz Mostert (AUS) Lee Holdsworth (AUS)	Walkinshaw Andretti United Holden Commodore ZB	6h15m06.1952s
2	Cameron Waters (AUS) James Moffat (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Mustang	+3.7395s
3	Brodie Kostecki (AUS) David Russell (AUS)	Erebus Motorsport Holden Commodore ZB	+6.1448s
4	Jamie Whincup (AUS) Craig Lowndes (AUS)	Triple Eight Holden Commodore ZB	+7.3448s
5	Bryce Fullwood (AUS) Warren Luff (AUS)	Walkinshaw Andretti United Holden Commodore ZB	+10.4073s
6	Nick Percat (AUS) Dale Wood (AUS)	Brad Jones Racing Holden Commodore ZB	+13.2740s
7	James Courtney (AUS) Tom Randle (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Mustang	+14.5753s
8	Todd Hazelwood (AUS) Dean Fiore (AUS)	Brad Jones Racing Holden Commodore ZB	+16.4182s
9	Tim Slade (AUS) Tim Blanchard (AUS)	Blanchard Racing Team Ford Mustang	+16.9603s
10	Will Davison (AUS) Alex Davison (AUS)	Dick Johnson Racing Ford Mustang	+17.5201s
11	David Reynolds (AUS) Luke Youlden (AUS)	Kelly Grove Racing Ford Mustang	+22.8753s
12	Macauley Jones (AUS) Chris Pither (NZL)	Brad Jones Racing Holden Commodore ZB	+24.9126s
13	Jake Kostecki (AUS) Kurt Kostecki (AUS)	Matt Stone Racing Holden Commodore ZB	+26.0605s
14	Garry Jacobson (AUS) Dylan O'Keeffe (AUS)	Team Sydney Holden Commodore ZB	+27.3676s
15	Jack Le Brocq (AUS) Zakkary Best (AUS)	Tickford Racing Ford Mustang	+31.8084s
16	Mark Winterbottom (AUS) Michael Caruso (AUS)	Team 18 Holden Commodore ZB	+35.9615s
17	Jack Smith (AUS) David Wall (AUS)	Brad Jones Racing Holden Commodore ZB	+39.8953s
18	Shane van Gisbergen (NZL) Garth Tander (AUS)	Triple Eight Holden Commodore ZB	+1m06.1673s
19	Fabian Coulthard (NZL) Jonathon Webb (AUS)	Team Sydney Holden Commodore ZB	-5 laps
20	William Brown (AUS) Jack Perkins (AUS)	Erebus Motorsport Holden Commodore ZB	-11 laps
NC	Andre Heimgartner (NZL) Matt Campbell (AUS)	Kelly Grove Racing Ford Mustang	159 laps-last lap too long
R	Broc Feeney (AUS) Russell Ingall (AUS)	Triple Eight Holden Commodore ZB	142 laps-accident
R	Anton De Pasquale (AUS) Tony D'Alberto (AUS)	Dick Johnson Racing Ford Mustang	139 laps-driveline
R	Zane Goddard (AUS) Jayden Ojeda (AUS)	Matt Stone Racing Holden Commodore ZB	112 laps-accident
R	Scott Pye (AUS) James Golding (AUS)	Team 18 Holden Commodore ZB	6 laps-power steering

Winner's average speed 99.421mph. Fastest lap Mostert 2m05.1862s, 111.019mph.

QUALIFYING TOP 10 SHOOTOUT

1 Mostert 2m03.3736s; **2 Pasquale** 2m03.6634s; **3 Waters** 2m03.6864s; **4 Slade** 2m04.0508s; **5 van Gisbergen** 2m04.3648s; **6 W Davison** 2m04.7787s; **7 Percat** 2m04.8988s; **8 Le Brocq** 2m05.3313s; **EX Brown**; **EX B Kostecki**.

QUALIFYING

1 Brown 2m03.8989s; **2 Pasquale** 2m03.9218s; **3 Mostert** 2m03.9770s; **4 Slade** 2m04.1540s; **5 Waters** 2m04.2035s; **6 B Kostecki** 2m04.2201s; **7 van Gisbergen** 2m04.2278s; **8 W Davison** 2m04.3078s; **9 Percat** 2m04.4421s; **10 Le Brocq** 2m04.4933s; **11 Whincup** 2m04.5158s; **12 Fullwood** 2m04.5555s; **13 Pye** 2m04.7273s; **14 Winterbottom** 2m04.7927s; **15 Feeney** 2m04.8273s; **16 Courtney** 2m04.9024s; **17 Heimgartner** 2m04.9394s; **18 Hazelwood** 2m04.9698s; **19 Reynolds** 2m05.0818s; **20 Coulthard** 2m05.1458s; **21 J Kostecki** 2m05.3350s; **22 Jones** 2m05.5207s; **23 Goddard** 2m05.6649s; **24 Smith** 2m05.8671s; **25 Jacobson** 2m05.9305s.

CHAMPIONSHIP

1 van Gisbergen 2930; **2 Whincup** 2719; **3 Mostert** 2494; **4 W Davison** 2389; **5 Waters** 2369; **6 Pasquale** 2075; **7 Percat** 2008; **8 Brown** 1838; **9 B Kostecki** 1788; **10 Winterbottom** 1725.

Piastrì strides towards title in messy F2 round

FIA FORMULA 2
JEDDAH (SAU)
4-5 DECEMBER
ROUND 7/8

Oscar Piastrì has one hand on the FIA Formula 2 crown thanks to his pair of wins from the championship's maiden visit to Saudi Arabia, which ended under a cloud following a frightening startline smash in the feature race.

The Jeddah Corniche street layout was always going to provide a unique challenge given its blend of high-speed, flowing blind corners lined by concrete walls, which rendered the venue the second fastest on the calendar behind Monza. It proved to be a drivers' favourite as the circuit delivered perhaps the ultimate test of skill, with Piastrì labelling the venue "Silverstone with concrete walls", while his Prema Racing team-mate Robert Shwartzman compared it to Macau.

A lap of this nature was always going to provide action and an increased likelihood of crashes, but the track was not to blame for the horrific collision that marred Sunday's feature race. Theo Pourchaire stalled on the grid and was collected by an unsighted Enzo Fittipaldi in a nasty crash that triggered immediate red flags. This followed an utterly confusing 40-minute delay to the start of the race caused by repairs to the barriers after an earlier Porsche Sprint Middle East snafu. At one point the race session was aborted, before seconds later officials declared it was indeed back on once a truck had cleared the circuit.

Luckily, Pourchaire and Fittipaldi emerged from the wreckage without serious injury



and, after being transferred by ambulance and helicopter to the King Fahad Armed Forces Hospital, Pourchaire revealed he was "fine". Amazingly, Fittipaldi suffered only a fractured right heel.

After a second lengthy delay to clear the wreckage, a shortened 20-minute bout, including a mandatory pitstop, was organised, with drivers and teams unaware of the condition of the two drivers. Racing only lasted eight minutes before Guilherme Samaia and debutant Olli Caldwell came together to result in a second red flag, but only after a safety car was initially called to inspire the lead group to visit the pits.

Once the order was sorted following the

countback, polesitter Piastrì was declared the winner, having led every lap prior to the safety car. Team-mate Shwartzman was classified second with Campos Racing's Ralph Boschung, who was fast throughout the weekend, claiming a maiden podium in third. Given the race was shortened, only half points were awarded.

In contrast to Sunday's events, Saturday's two sprint races provided entertaining tussles to dispel fears that overtaking around the 3.8-mile tour was impossible.

Once racing got under way after an opening-lap stoppage due to a crash involving Samaia, Caldwell and Marino Sato, DAMS racer Marcus Armstrong managed to



Clean-up and extrication effort begins after Fittipaldi and Pourchaire shunt



Broad smile for race-one victor Armstrong



Piastri claimed fourth
and fifth wins of season
to edge closer to title

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IMAGES

hold off fellow Kiwi Liam Lawson, while Juri Vips completed a Hitech GP 2-3. Behind them there was plenty of action, as Jehan Daruvala climbed from 11th to finish fifth behind Felipe Drugovich. The Carlin-run Indian pulled off arguably the pass of the weekend to overtake Piastri and Lundgaard in one move late on, but he was handed a five-second penalty for gaining an unfair advantage in using the Turn 1 runoff to pass team-mate Dan Ticktum. Due to F2's peculiar format, that meant Daruvala would start from reversed-grid pole for race two after being demoted to 10th.

After an opening-lap safety car deployed for a startline crash that wiped out Clement Novalak, Samaia, Alessio Deledda and Armstrong, Daruvala led the majority of race two before being hit with an identical penalty. This time it was for using the runoff to defend from long-time pursuer Piastri. In the end, Piastri managed to get past to take a fourth victory of the season without the need of the penalty.

The race ended under a third safety car after Lawson hit the wall at Turn 13. Piastri led home Bent Viscaal (Trident) and Schwartzman, who moved to second in the standings after a nightmare couple of races for Guanyu Zhou. The Chinese spun while attempting a pass on Lundgaard in the first race before surging back to eighth in race two, and ended the weekend fourth in the feature.

Piastri now heads to this weekend's Abu Dhabi title decider with a 51.5-point lead over Schwartzman with 65 on the table.

TOM HOWARD

RESULTS ROUND 7/8, JEDDAH (SAU), 4-5 DECEMBER, FEATURE RACE (5 LAPS - 19.026 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Oscar Piastri (AUS)	Prema Racing	47m09.339s
2	Robert Schwartzman (RUS)	Prema Racing	+1.148s
3	Ralph Boschung (CHE)	Campos Racing	+2.757s
4	Guanyu Zhou (CHN)	UNI Virtuosi Racing	+3.020s
5	Felipe Drugovich (BRA)	UNI Virtuosi Racing	+4.407s
6	Juri Vips (EST)	Hitech Grand Prix	+4.871s
7	Christian Lundgaard (DNK)	ART Grand Prix	+6.069s
8	Marcus Armstrong (NZL)	DAMS	+6.178s
9	Liam Lawson (NZL)	Hitech Grand Prix	+6.547s
10	Dan Ticktum (GBR)	Carlin	+9.434s
11	Jehan Daruvala (IND)	Carlin	+9.593s
12	Bent Viscaal (NLD)	Trident	+10.177s
13	Jack Doohan (AUS)	MP Motorsport	+10.445s
14	Logan Sargeant (USA)	HWA Racelab	+12.359s
15	Roy Nissany (ISR)	DAMS	+12.740s
16	Olli Caldwell (GBR)	Campos Racing	+13.736s
17	Guilherme Samaia (BRA)	Charouz Racing System	+15.494s
18	Marino Sato (JPN)	Trident	+16.871s
19	Clement Novalak (FRA)	MP Motorsport	+17.134s
20	Alessio Deledda (ITA)	HWA Racelab	+20.776s
R	Theo Pourchaire (FRA)	ART Grand Prix	0 laps-collision
R	Enzo Fittipaldi (BRA)	Charouz Racing System	0 laps-collision

Winner's average speed 24.208mph. **Fastest lap** Piastri 1m45.326s, 131.124mph.

SPRINT RACE 1 (20 LAPS - 76.572 MILES)

Grid decided by result of qualifying, with top 10 reversed.

1 Armstrong 41m44.102s; **2 Lawson** (pic, top right) +0.563s; **3 Vips** +2.044s; **4 Drugovich** +2.826s; **5 Schwartzman** +8.278s; **6 Lundgaard** +8.377s; **7 Ticktum** +8.452s; **8 Piastri** +8.613s; **9 Viscaal** +10.468s; **10 Daruvala** +10.484s; **11 Doohan** +10.566s; **12 Fittipaldi** +10.965s; **13 Nissany** +12.977s; **14 Novalak** +13.104s; **15 Boschung** +14.332s; **16 Sargeant** +15.308s; **17 Zhou** +17.343s; **18 Caldwell** +24.652s; **R Pourchaire** 13 laps-accident; **R Deledda** 13 laps-technical; **R Sato** 0 laps-collision; **R Samaia** 0 laps-collision.

Winner's average speed 110.082mph. **Fastest lap** Schwartzman 1m44.179s, 132.568mph.

SPRINT RACE 2 (20 LAPS - 76.572 MILES)

Grid decided by result of Sprint race 1, with top 10 finishers reversed.

1 Piastri 45m31.603s; **2 Viscaal** +2.521s; **3 Schwartzman** +3.371s; **4 Ticktum** +3.454s; **5 Doohan** +3.598s; **6 Pourchaire** +3.661s; **7 Fittipaldi** +3.879s; **8 Zhou** +4.128s; **9 Boschung** +4.351s; **10 Drugovich** +4.619s; **11 Nissany** +4.813s; **12 Caldwell** +6.148s; **13 Sato** +6.449s; **14 Daruvala** +7.003s; **15 Lundgaard** +7.243s; **R Lawson** 17 laps-accident; **R Vips** 5 laps-accident; **R Sargeant** 5 laps-technical; **R Armstrong** 0 laps-collision; **R Novalak** 0 laps-collision; **R Deledda** 0 laps-collision; **R Samaia** 0 laps-collision.

Winner's average speed 100.914mph. **Fastest lap** Piastri 1m43.940s, 132.873mph.

CHAMPIONSHIP **1 Piastri 213.5**; **2 Schwartzman** 162; **3 Zhou** 149; **4 Ticktum** 139.5; **5 Pourchaire** 124; **6 Vips** 116; **7 Daruvala** 96; **8 Lawson** 93; **9 Drugovich** 72; **10 Richard Verschoor** 55.



F2 format quirk meant
penalised Daruvala
had pole for race two

GALLOWAY

OGIER'S EIGHTH WONDER OF THE WORLD

He's shuffling into semi-rally-retirement, but Toyota's star was at the peak of his powers as he emerged atop a 2021 title fight against team-mate Evans

TOM HOWARD

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY MCKLEIN

Sebastien Ogier underlined his place in World Rally Championship history with his eighth world title in his final full-time campaign, while the breathtaking generation of WRC machinery, introduced in 2017 and the most spectacular cars since the Group B era, delivered a memorable last blast through the world's toughest stages.

These perhaps seminal WRC moments played out fittingly across a greatest-hits 12-round calendar, including long-awaited returns to the iconic Safari and Acropolis rallies, as normality threatened to return after last year's COVID-induced shortened season. Add to that a titanic title fight between Toyota team-mates Ogier and Elfyn Evans that went down to the wire (including two of the closest battles in history), a crop of young stars making their mark, and plenty of drama in between – 2021 was a season to cherish.

After he'd won four of the first six rallies, the odds on an Ogier domination were short in the summer. But to borrow an old football cliché, it was very much a season of two halves. Ultimately the WRC trophy engraver was able to revert to muscle memory, but only after Ogier came through an intense Monza title decider that went down to the final powerstage. The history books will forever show a vintage Ogier performance – he won five of the 12 events – while managing to score points at every

round. A hallmark of the 37-year-old's secret to previous successes was ever-present: the incredible ability of knowing when to push and when to concede and bank points.

This trait has rubbed off on team-mate Evans, who proved that last year's narrow title defeat to Ogier was no fluke. Even in Ogier's back yard at the Monte Carlo season opener, Evans threatened before being blown away by his team-mate, who recovered from a flat tyre to kick off the year with a record eighth success on the Monte's twisting asphalt roads.

The pair were back at it when Croatia's asphalt stages made a WRC debut, following a subdued Arctic Rally Finland for the Toyota duo, which featured Ogier's only on-stage blemish when he crashed into a snowbank. Despite losing several minutes, he somehow managed to salvage a point from the powerstage. But Croatia offered a glimpse into the title race that would unfold. Lucky not to exit the rally on the final day after a road traffic accident, for which he incurred a suspended one-event ban, Ogier managed to overhaul Evans's 3.9-second lead on the powerstage to win the rally by 0.6s, the third closest finish in history.

Evans fought back with a victory in Portugal after a Hyundai collapse, with Ogier down in third, but back-to-back wins in Sardinia and the attritional Safari put Ogier back in the box seat in the title race. This was helped by Evans retiring after hitting a rock on Kenya's sandy stages, and Hyundai's Thierry Neuville surrendering a likely win due to a rear-suspension failure on the final day.

The championship seemed a foregone conclusion in Ogier's



Ogier/Ingrassia partnership
ends on highest of highs

“TO BORROW AN OLD FOOTBALL CLICHE, IT WAS VERY MUCH A SEASON OF TWO HALVES”

favour when Evans slipped 44 points adrift after a gearbox issue thwarted his Acropolis Rally victory hopes. But the final three events reignited the title race as Evans found another level, epitomised by a mesmerising drive to blitz the field at Rally Finland, where he became only the second British driver to win what is one of the WRC's jewel-in-the-crown events.

With Ogier engaging lead-protection mode, the gap dwindled to 17 points as Evans capitalised on the momentum, performing valiantly under intense pressure to finish second in Spain and take >>

The return of the Safari is a test of survival, out of which Ogier emerges victorious



the title fight to a Monza decider. A battle for the ages unfolded, with the lead changing hands six times between the pair, before Ogier, despite a brief scare when he clipped a barrier on the famous banking, came through to claim an emotional win and the title. Ogier was not to be denied a fairytale finish in his final event as a full-timer and the last rally for his co-driver of 16 years, Julien Ingrassia.

Nine victories from 12 events emphasised Toyota's dominance as former driver Jari-Matti Latvala, installed in place of Tommi Makinen, led the marque to a deserved drivers' and constructors' double in his first season of management. If Ogier or Evans hit trouble, the team could rely on its precocious young talent Kalle Rovannerpa, who led the championship heading into Croatia before crashing out on the opening stage. The then 20-year-old bounced back impressively by becoming the championship's youngest-ever winner in Estonia, before producing one of the drives of the season to utterly dominate the Acropolis. It's only a matter of time before Rovannerpa mounts a title challenge.



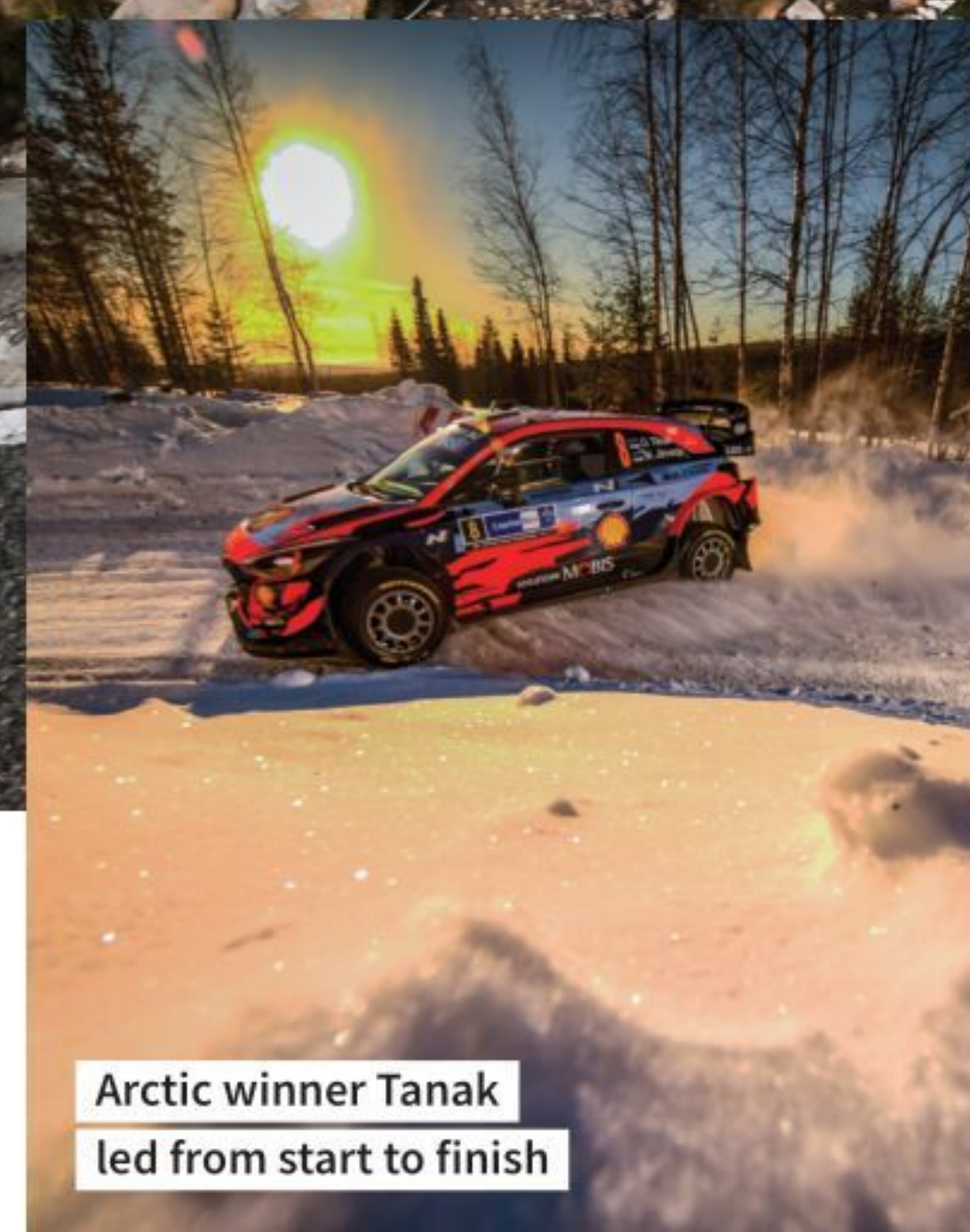
Neuville, here en route to his Spanish win, led Hyundai charge



Rovannerpa youngest ever WRC winner in Estonia



Evans only second Brit to win Rally Finland



Arctic winner Tanak led from start to finish

Likewise, Toyota's development driver Takamoto Katsuta emerged as the surprise package. He was the only driver to finish in the top six in each of the first six events, including a maiden podium in Kenya, where he followed Ogier home. But the Japanese's season fell apart once he lost regular co-driver Daniel Barritt to injury in Estonia. This triggered a series of co-driver changes, crashes and even a withdrawal from the Acropolis due to his substitute co-driver Keaton Williams needing to attend a family emergency.

Toyota's arch-rival Hyundai did its best job to throw away both championships through reliability issues. The South Korean marque possessed the fastest car, but its fragility proved to be its Achilles' heel. Neuville and 2019 champion Ott Tanak bore the brunt of the misfortune. In another universe the pair could have found themselves easily at the forefront of their own Ogier versus

Evans-style intra-team title battle had results gone their way.

Victory for Tanak in the Arctic in February was to be the highlight of his year before suspension failures took him out of commanding leads in Portugal and Sardinia, robbing him of likely wins. Neuville claimed a convincing victory on home soil in Belgium and then produced one of his finest drives to win in Spain in October, but by then it was all too late. Neuville too suffered suspension failures – in Portugal and on the Safari – while leading rallies. Add to that a power-steering failure in Greece, and the game was well and truly up.

Craig Breen added further proof of the i20's strong pace in the third car he shared with Dani Sordo. He enjoyed his strongest WRC showing yet, claiming three podiums in five events, including second places in Estonia and Belgium. Sordo also produced solid drives to net three podiums, but in truth was outclassed by Breen.

ROUND BY ROUND

Monte Carlo Rally

- 1 Ogier/Ingrassia
- 2 Evans/Martin
- 3 Neuville/Wydaeghe

Ogier kickstarts title defence by recording record eighth career Monte victory. Tanak initially leads before two punctures force him out. Flat tyre for Ogier means the advantage swings to Evans, before Ogier reels off a series of stage wins to win by 32.6s. Neuville recovers from an early spin to secure third.

Arctic Rally Finland

- 1 Tanak/Jarveoja
 - 2 Rovannerpa/Halttunen
 - 3 Neuville/Wydaeghe
- Tanak dominates WRC's first Arctic Rally Finland, leading from start to finish to spoil hopes of local favourite Rovannerpa. Toyota's youngster secures the championship lead by holding off Neuville for the runner-up spot. Ogier scores one point on the powerstage after losing 20 minutes in a snowbank on Saturday.

Rally Croatia

- 1 Ogier/Ingrassia
 - 2 Evans/Martin
 - 3 Neuville/Wydaeghe
- Ogier bounces back as Croatia's asphalt roads make a WRC debut, but he only secures victory by pipping Evans by 0.6s on the final stage – the third closest winning margin in history. Neuville leads into Saturday, but fades to third after an incorrect tyre choice. Points leader Rovannerpa crashes on the first stage.

Rally Portugal

- 1 Evans/Martin
 - 2 Sordo/Rozada
 - 3 Ogier/Ingrassia
- Hyundai dominates early stages to lock out the podium spots, but Neuville suffers rear-suspension damage after an overoptimistic pacenote, then Tanak surrenders the lead with similar suspension failure. Evans scoops up his first win of the season from Sordo, while Ogier rounds out the podium.



“IF OGIER OR EVANS HIT TROUBLE, TOYOTA COULD RELY ON PRECOCIOUS YOUNG TALENT KALLE ROVANPERA”

But the i20's fragility rendered Hyundai boss Andrea Adamo even more emotional than usual as he strove to fix the car's faults, leaving him counting down the days until the 2022 season. No doubt Hyundai will return much stronger next year, and one positive it can take from this season is that it may have found a talent to lead it long into the future in the form of Oliver Solberg. The son of 2003 WRC champion Petter Solberg started the year in WRC2 with the marque, but was promoted to the WRC car in the Arctic, where he finished an impressive seventh on his debut. He ended the year matching his experienced team-mates at Monza on his way to fifth in only his fourth outing. Solberg's reward for this is to share the third factory car with Sordo in 2022.

While Toyota and Hyundai locked horns and filled all the podium places between them, there was a third player in the series: M-Sport Ford. Mindful of the WRC's seismic shift in regulations for 2022, and its limited resources compared to its factory-backed rivals, the British squad's expectations were reduced. Much of the focus was shifted to developing its Ford Puma to ensure that it can rejoin the battle with Toyota and Hyundai in 2022.

M-Sport fielded a scaled-down effort of two Fiestas spearheaded by Gus Greensmith, who plotted all the rounds for a second year, alongside split WRC/WRC2 programmes for Adrien Fourmaux and Teemu Suninen. That roster didn't last the season — Suninen left the team mid-season, frustrated by a lack of testing and switching between the WRC and WRC2 cars. High-profile rolls in the opening stages at the Monte Carlo Rally and in Sardinia also increased the pressure to perform in challenging circumstances. In a strange turn of events, Suninen ended the season with Hyundai, initially driving a WRC2 entry before finishing sixth at the Monza finale where he stood in for Tanak, who was absent for family reasons.

Suninen's departure gifted more WRC seat time to Fourmaux, a meteoric rise to the top level for the inexperienced 26-year-old. The Frenchman emerged as one of the surprise packages of 2021, »

Rally Sardinia

1 Ogier/Ingrassia

2 Evans/Martin

3 Neuville/Wydaeghe

Hyundai's reliability frailties strike again as another win slips from the marque's grasp. Tanak dominates Friday before a rock damages his rear suspension, putting him out of the rally. Sordo clips a culvert and rolls out of second. Ogier breezes through to head Evans for a Toyota 1-2, with Neuville salvaging third.

Safari Rally

1 Ogier/Ingrassia

2 Katsuta/Barritt

3 Tanak/Jarveoja

Safari's return to the WRC after 19 years is brutal. Neuville survives three punctures to lead opening two days, but rear-suspension failure robs him of victory. Ogier recovers from a damper issue to overhaul Katsuta, who scores a maiden podium. Evans and Sordo crash out, while Rovannerpa retires.

Rally Estonia

1 Rovannerpa/Halttunen

2 Breen/Nagle

3 Neuville/Wydaeghe

Local favourite Tanak leads from the start, but punctures in consecutive Friday stages end his victory hopes. Rovannerpa dominates the remaining stages to win by almost a minute, becoming the youngest ever winner in the WRC. Breen stars to finish second, while Neuville is third ahead of Ogier and Evans.

Ypres Rally

1 Neuville/Wydaeghe

2 Breen/Nagle

3 Rovannerpa/Halttunen

Former Ypres winners Neuville and Breen make their experience count as they score a dominant 1-2 for Hyundai. After taking the lead on Friday morning, Neuville storms to victory by half a minute from Breen. A puncture and a broken jack end Tanak's hopes of third. Rovannerpa is the best of the Toyotas in third.

OGIER'S CHILDHOOD DREAM FULFILLED

While 2021 didn't feature his most dominant run to a title, Sebastien Ogier is content to have fulfilled a childhood dream that resulted in him leaving an indelible mark on the World Rally Championship. Although he is set to contest selected rallies next year, the record books will forever show Ogier as an eight-time world champion (2013-2018, 2020-2021). He has fought hard throughout his career, with that desire illustrated by one final push to defeat Elfyn Evans to win the Rally Monza championship decider. It marked an emotional end to Ogier's full-time WRC career and his 16-year partnership with co-driver Julien Ingrassia, who will retire completely from the sport.

The 37-year-old admits he wasn't at his strongest in the second half of the campaign, having earmarked Evans as a title contender early on. "If we talk about enjoyment, I enjoyed the first half of the season more than the second half because I have been managing this [points] gap and I haven't produced my best performance, and maybe I have stayed a little bit too much on the safe side," said Ogier. "But at the end of the day, the only thing you remember when the year is over is who has won the championship. I am super-happy winning this title. Two years battling for the championship at the last rally [against Evans] is not a surprise."

Reflecting on his career, Ogier is proud to fulfil an ambition that initially seemed unattainable. "I never forget this dream of mine as a child watching the Monte Carlo Rally with the eyes full of stars thinking I was born in the wrong place – 'I don't have any money and I cannot do that,'" he added.

"I am proud of this journey and to be part of the history of a sport which gave me a dream as a kid. The dream was to be world champion, and that is something I managed in 2013, and after that to add many more victories and titles was really a privilege. I managed to win with different teams, and all those memories I will cherish forever."



Happy Ogier, as Ingrassia takes pre-retirement nap



Breen's Hyundai efforts earned him M-Sport gig

"THE FIGHT FOR WRC2 HONOURS WAS JUST AS HARD FOUGHT AS ITS BIGGER BROTHER"

highlighted by a fifth on his top-class debut in Croatia. A fastest stage time emerged in Kenya alongside another fifth, behind fourth-placed Greensmith, who delivered consistency and the team's best result of the season. While success was fleeting for M-Sport, next year promises much more, with optimism oozing from a camp that will return to three full-time entries, headed by new signing Breen.

The fight for WRC2 honours was just as hard fought as its bigger brother, producing a season-long battle of the Norwegians between Andreas Mikkelsen (Skoda) and Mads Ostberg (Citroen). With both eager to return to the WRC's top class, the battle was intense, and it was Mikkelsen who came out on top with three wins to Ostberg's one. Had Ostberg avoided the lion's share of misfortune in punctures and mechanical issues, the fight wouldn't have ended with a round to spare. But there was to be no denying Mikkelsen, who also dominated the European Rally Championship to ensure he ends the year with two titles, sending a clear message to WRC teams.

But it was Ogier who issued perhaps the most timely of reminders in staking a claim as the WRC's best ever driver with his eighth world title. The championship will miss Ogier when he moves into a part-time-driver role at Toyota in 2022 as the WRC heads into new pastures. What is certain is that there will be a different name on the WRC trophy next year, but Ogier will be a hard act to follow. ❧

ROUND BY ROUND

Acropolis Rally

- 1 **Rovanpera/Halttunen**
- 2 **Tanak/Jarveoja**
- 3 **Ogier/Ingrassia**

Rovanpera produces arguably his best drive to date to dominate the Acropolis. He blitzes the opposition on Saturday to set up a comfortable second career win from Tanak. Evans and Neuville are hit by gearbox and power-steering issues respectively, while Ogier extends his points lead by finishing third.

Rally Finland

- 1 **Evans/Martin**
- 2 **Tanak/Jarveoja**
- 3 **Breen/Nagle**

Evans becomes only the second Brit to win Rally Finland after a dominant display on the event's 70th anniversary. Breen leads on Friday, before Evans storms to the top on Saturday. Favourite Rovanpera crashes out, while Neuville retires due to a water leak. Ogier's lead is reduced – he can only manage fifth.

Rally Spain

- 1 **Neuville/Wydaeghe**
- 2 **Evans/Martin**
- 3 **Sordo/Carrera**

Neuville and Evans fight it out on Spain's asphalt, and the Hyundai man comes out on top by almost half a minute, despite a late scare ahead of the powerstage. Evans drives valiantly to second to take the title fight to a decider, while Ogier is fourth. Sordo impresses on home soil.

Rally Monza

- 1 **Ogier/Ingrassia**
- 2 **Evans/Martin**
- 3 **Sordo/Carrera**

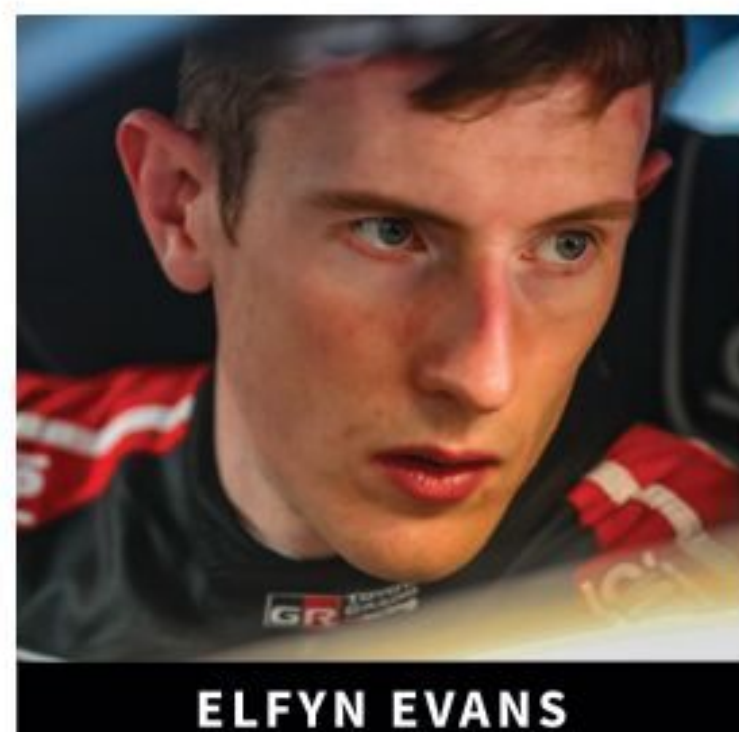
Ogier and Evans produce an epic scrap on the title decider. Ogier leads by 17 points, and only half a second splits the pair heading into the final day. Then Evans spins, handing the victory to Ogier by 7.3s – and an eighth world title. Sordo inherits third from Neuville, who finishes fourth despite crashing on Saturday.

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



SEBASTIEN OGIER

1 Won five rallies from 12 events, including a tense decider, to bow out of the WRC full-time in style with an eighth world title. Only blemish was a crash in Arctic Rally Finland. Pushed when he had to and banked points when rivals faltered.



ELFYN EVANS

2 Reeled in and pushed Ogier all the way in the title fight, highlighted by a career best win in Finland. Impressed under pressure in the second half of the season, but an error in Kenya and mechanical issue in Greece proved costly.



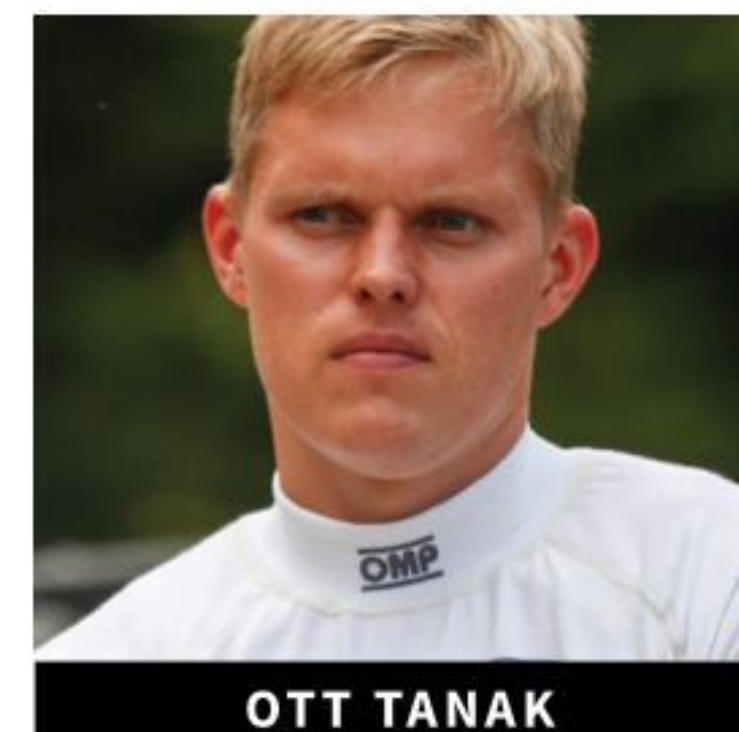
KALLE ROVANPERA

3 Showed a glimpse into his exciting potential by becoming the youngest ever WRC winner in Estonia, before blitzing the field at Acropolis on event debut. Played a key role in helping Toyota seal manufacturers' crown. One to watch in 2022.



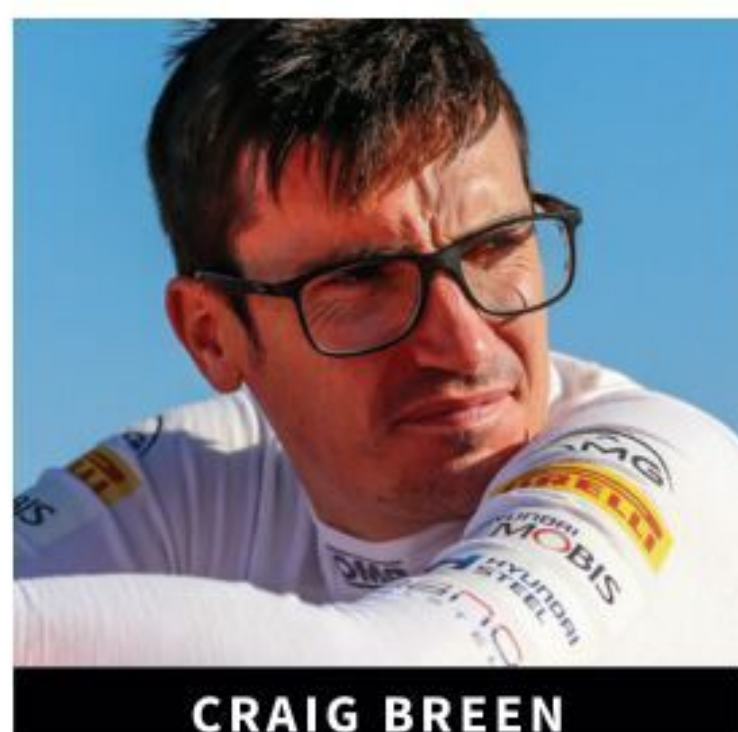
THIERRY NEUVILLE

4 Had reliability issues not robbed of him of likely victories or podiums in Safari, Portugal and Greece, he could have challenged Ogier for the title. Produced devastating pace in Belgium and Spain to score two dominant wins.



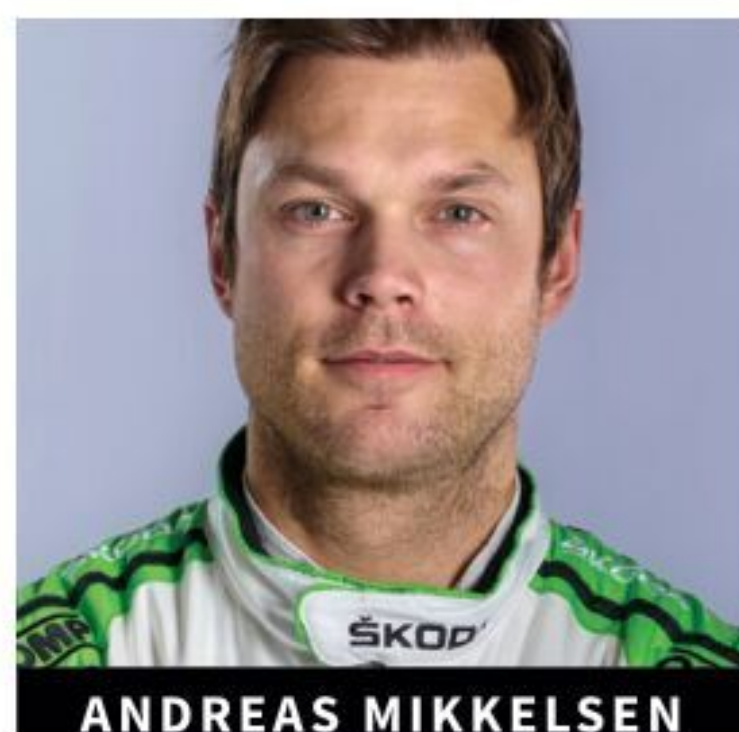
OTT TANAK

5 Won more stages than anyone this season but, like Neuville, was robbed by reliability issues and punctures that cost him victory chances in Portugal, Sardinia and Estonia. Did show his best by winning in Arctic Rally Finland.



CRAIG BREEN

6 Scored three podiums from five outings with Hyundai and finished every rally contested inside the top eight. Enjoyed his best ever WRC form, recording back-to-back seconds in Estonia and Belgium.



ANDREAS MIKKELSEN

7 Ended the year with the WRC2 and European Rally Championship titles. Edged Mads Ostberg in WRC2 while winning the ERC a round early. Could do no more in his dual campaign and is unlucky not to have a full-time WRC drive in 2022.



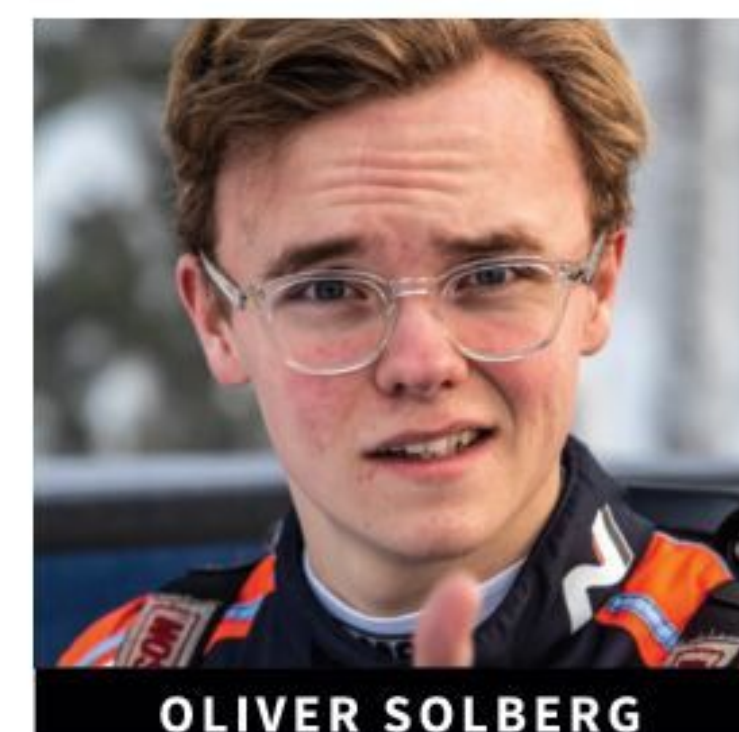
TAKAMOTO KATSUTA

8 Arguably the surprise package of 2021. Was the only driver to finish every rally in the top six in the first half of the season. Led a rally and scored deserved maiden podium with second in Safari. Season fell apart after a series of enforced co-driver changes.



ADRIEN FOURMAUX

9 Was able to match and beat more experienced team-mate Greensmith on his first outings in a WRC car. Finished fifth on debut, notched up his maiden and M-Sport's only stage win of the season in Kenya, and displayed impressive pace.



OLIVER SOLBERG

10 Impressed Hyundai enough in four top-flight WRC outings to secure a part-time drive next year. Finished seventh on WRC debut, and ended the year matching his team-mates for pace to finish a career best fifth at Monza.

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	CAR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	PTS
1	Sebastien Ogier (FRA)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	1	20	1	3	1	1	4	5	3	5	4	1	230
2	Elfyn Evans (GBR)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	2	5	2	1	2	10	5	4	6	1	2	2	207
3	Thierry Neuville (BEL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	3	3	3	36	3	R	3	1	8	R	1	4	176
4	Kalle Rovanpera (FIN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	4	2	R	22	25	6	1	3	1	34	5	9	142
5	Ott Tanak (EST)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	R	1	4	21	24	3	31	6	2	2	R	-	128
6	Dani Sordo (ESP)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	5	-	-	2	17	12	-	-	4	-	3	3	81
7	Takamoto Katsuta (JPN)	Toyota Gazoo Racing WRT	Toyota Yaris WRC	6	6	6	4	4	2	R	R	-	37	40	7	78
8	Craig Breen (IRL)	Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT	Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC	-	4	8	-	-	-	2	2	-	3	-	-	76
9	Gus Greensmith (GBR)	M-Sport Ford WRT	Ford Fiesta WRC	8	9	7	5	26	4	32	47	5	6	6	8	64
10	Adrien Fourmaux (FRA)	M-Sport Ford WRT	Ford Fiesta WRC	9	48	5	6	30	5	12	R	7	7	16	55	42

11 **Teemu Suninen** (M-Sport Ford WRT Ford Fiesta WRC/Movisport SRL Volkswagen Polo GTI R5/Hyundai Shell Mobis WRT Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 29; 12 **Esapekka Lappi** (Movisport SRL Volkswagen Polo GTI R5/RTE-Motorsport Toyota Yaris WRC) 22; 13 **Oliver Solberg** (Hyundai 2C Competition Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 22; 14 **Mads Ostberg** (TRT World Rally Team Citroen C3 Rally2) 15; 15 **Yohan Rossel** (Citroen C3 Rally2) 13; 16 **Jari Huttunen** (Hyundai Motorsport N Hyundai i20 R5) 10; 17 **Andreas Mikkelsen** (Toksport WRT Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 10; 18 **Pierre-Louis Loubet** (Hyundai 2C Competition Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 6; 19 **Onkar Rai** (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 6; 20 **Pepe Lopez** (Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 4; 21 **Pieter Cracco** (Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 4; 22 **Alexey Lukyanuk** (Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 4; 22 **Karan Patel** (Ford Fiesta R5) 4; 22 **Nil Solans** (Hyundai 2C Competition Hyundai i20 Coupe WRC) 4; 25 **Eric Camilli** (Sports & You Citroen C3 Rally2) 3; 26 **Jan Solans** (Citroen C3 Rally2) 2; 26 **Carl Tundo** (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 2; 26 **Fabian Kreim** (Pole Promotion Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 2; 29 **Marco Bulacia Wilkinson** (Toksport WRT Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 2; 30 **Nikolay Gryazin** (Movisport SRL Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 2; 31 **Emil Lindholm** (Skoda Fabia Rally2 Evo) 1; 32 **Vincent Verschueren** (Volkswagen Polo GTI R5) 1.



A BRAZILIAN TREASURE YOU SHOULDN'T MISS

It's rarely mentioned when it comes to assessing the best national contests, but the country's Stock Car series has an ever-growing appeal

JAMES NEWBOLD

One is the youngster going for his first title, the other a seasoned multiple champion hoping to further enhance his legend when the close-fought 2021 campaign is decided this weekend. The battle for Brazilian Stock Car Pro Series honours between Gabriel Casagrande and three-time champion Daniel Serra reaches its conclusion at Interlagos with two races on Sunday. It might not have the world in its grips to the same extent as Max Verstappen versus Lewis Hamilton but, like Formula 1 with its Netflix-assisted growth, its stock is rising.

The series has new owners led by telecom entrepreneur Lincoln Oliveira who have invested significantly in advertising and TV coverage, including live-streaming races on Motorsport.TV. And it's strategy appears to be working.

"Stock cars in Brazil is something that I really like to watch," Mercedes GT ace Raffaele Marciello told Autosport earlier this year. "Because they are not on Eurosport or on big channels [in Europe]

nobody really watches, but the level is mega-high, so I'd like to do it."

Those on the inside are noticing too.

"The championship is on fire, it's really picked up from last year to this one," says ex-F1 driver Nelson Piquet Jr, who entered his own team this year but parted ways with the squad in September due to poor results. "We're up to 32 cars in a pandemic situation and in an economic crisis that Brazil is facing, so I must say that they're doing a very good job with what they have."

The ingredients are the key, with a mix of ex-F1 drivers such as Piquet, Felipe Massa, 2014 champion Rubens Barrichello and Ricardo Zonta taking on established series stars including five-time champion Caca Bueno and treble title winner Ricardo Mauricio, all racing virtually identical silhouette cars badged as Chevrolet or Toyota. It makes Stock Cars one of the motor racing world's hidden gems.

"This championship has been very strong at least for the last decade," says 2010 Stock Car champion Max Wilson. "It might be getting a little

STAT
27.27
Average cars qualifying
within 1s of pole
in 2021

Ferrari GT driver Daniel
Serra has a hat-trick
of Stock Car titles



F1 veteran Rubens
Barrichello has won a
couple of rounds this year



stronger every year, but it has been strong for a long time and I think it is one of the toughest championships around the world to do well because we normally have 25 cars within a second in qualifying.”

In fact, on average no fewer than 27 cars have qualified within a second of pole this season (at the second Curitiba round, that reached a high of 29). The racing is fierce too, thanks to a push-to-pass system that can be used for around 15 to 20 seconds at a time depending on the track, requiring drivers to think tactically. Amid such fierce competition, showing well has launched several drivers onto the global stage in sportscars.

Serra is just one example. His 2017–19 title hat-trick consolidated a growing reputation in international GT racing – he scored his first of two GTE Pro class wins at Le Mans for Aston Martin in 2017. Now a full-time Ferrari driver in the World Endurance Championship, Serra says competing in both series has helped his development.

“One helped me in the other one: things that I learn in the Stock Car

“THIS CHAMPIONSHIP HAS BEEN STRONG FOR A DECADE AND IS ONE OF THE TOUGHEST AROUND THE WORLD”

I can use [in WEC] and stuff that I learn here I can use in the Stock Car,” the Eurofarma Chevrolet driver says.

Marcos Gomes, champion in 2015, and his 2016 successor Felipe Fraga have also used it as a springboard to race at Le Mans in the GTE Am class. “For me, Daniel and Fraga, everything that we learned up to now in our careers, we learned it in Stock Cars,” says Cavaleiro Sports Chevrolet man Gomes. “Without the Stock Car Series, >>



I think we couldn't be here [in WEC]."

"Maybe people don't know exactly what is the Stock Car series because we are quite far away," adds Serra. "It's a really nice series and super-competitive – all the drivers that I know went there to drive in the guest races, they always love it and want to go back."

All the cars are built by Giaffone Racing, a Brazilian company run by Jose 'Zequinha' Giaffone, the son of 1987 Stock Car champion Jose 'Zeca' Giaffone and brother to early 2000s IRL racer Felipe. Since 1999 it has supplied the spec chassis – including suspension, dampers and springs – and two years later began to supply engines. Today, it works with the series to ensure that the two engine marques (each producing around 440-450bhp and, depending on the track, up to around 550bhp with push-to-pass engaged) are fully equalised.

"We provide the whole car for the series: the chassis, the wishbones, everything we do in-house," says Giaffone, whose company employs 80 people and is expanding into developing electric vehicles for road use. "We also build all the parts. It's easy to control so they just can change the set-up, ride-height, the camber, caster and so on. Even the shocks are the same for everybody, so that makes the series very, very close."

As a result, time is found in small details. "In Stock Car, the set-up makes more difference than in GT," confirms Gomes.

"Almost everything is the same, so it's really on the details," says Serra. "The cars are quite the same, all the cars have the same potential. Maybe they have to work in different ways, so you just need to do small set-up adjustments to reach the maximum potential."

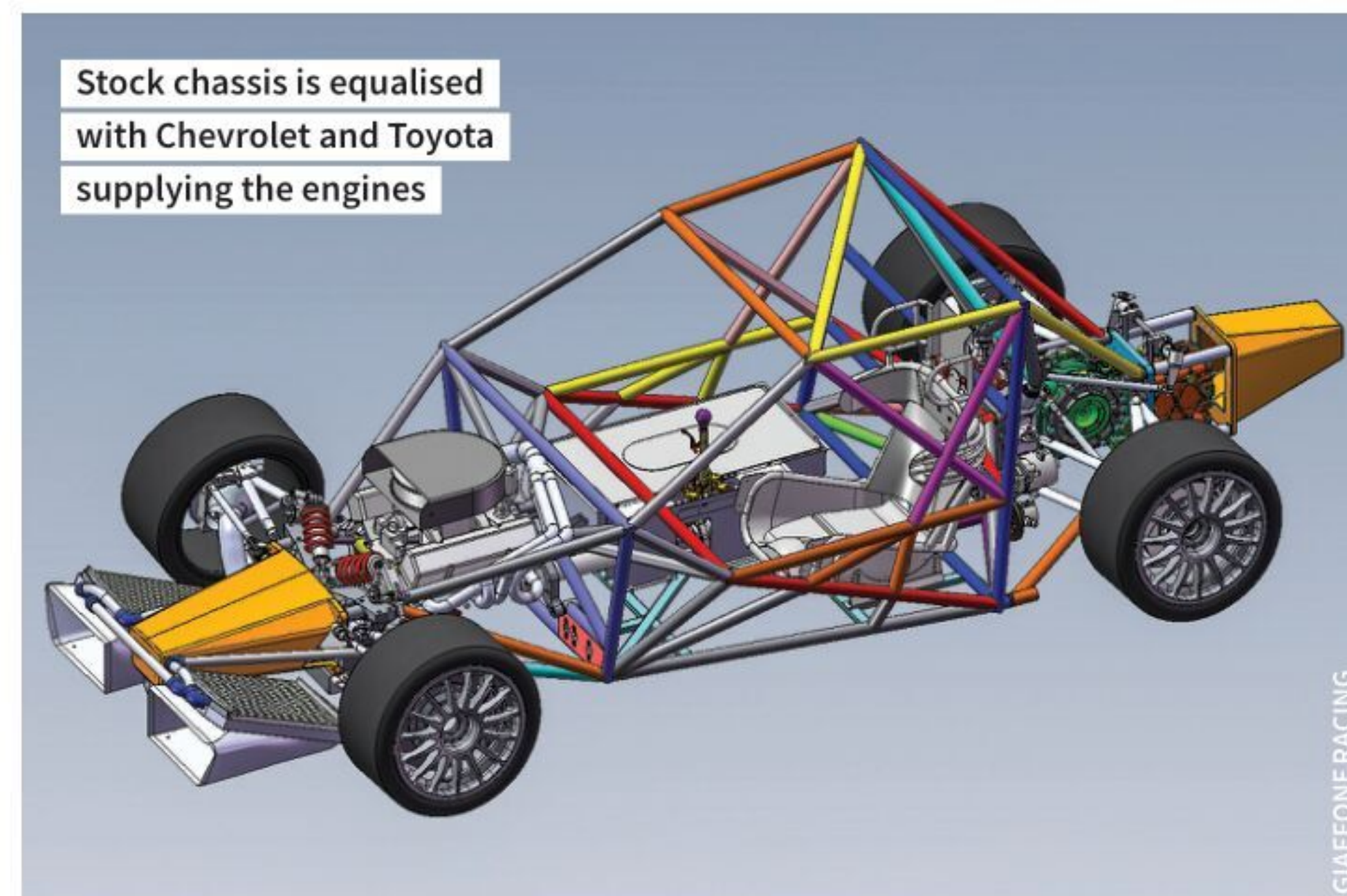
Giaffone reckons that leaves "maybe 15 or 20% of the parts [the teams] can do by themselves". But Piquet explains that despite the tightly governed regulations, "because you have a margin of grey areas in the regulations, it brings up quite a big gap of opportunities and chances teams have to do things better".

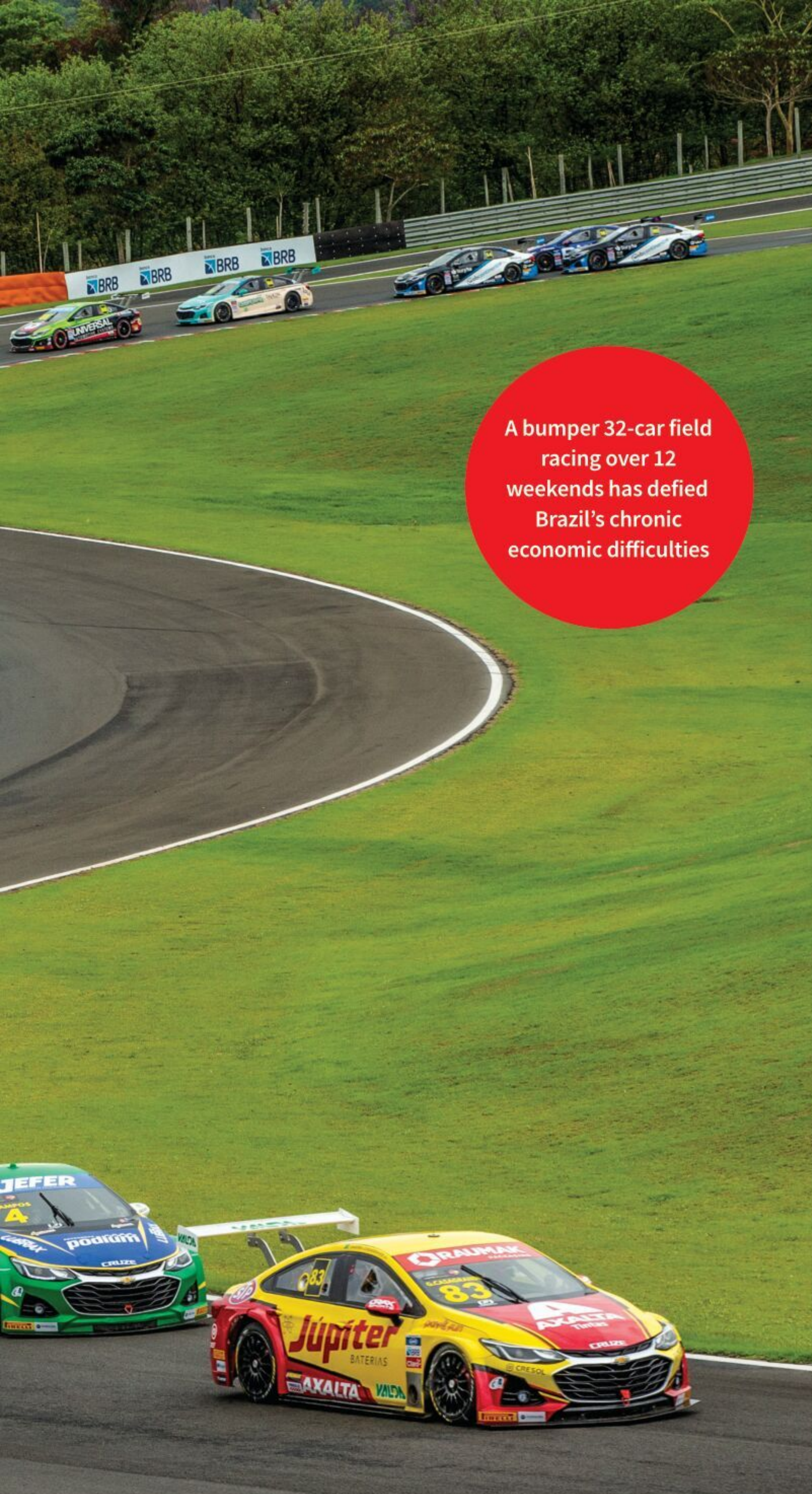
"The brake ducts, the way you put the doors, the way you put the bonnet, the angle of the windscreen, there's many details that we have to fabricate ourselves," Piquet adds. "As much as they're really tight on regulations, for example ride-height, springs, dampers, gearbox ratios –



all the common stuff that needs to be standard – they don't have a laser scanner like NASCAR has for [checking] the angle of the windscreen. OK, our series is not as aero-dependent as NASCAR – because NASCAR is constantly at 150mph – but still, because the engines are all the same, if you have something that has a little bit less drag and you end up gaining three or four km/h on the straights, they end up making a difference on the car, as much as the cars are pretty much all identical."

Since Toyota's entry to the series in 2020, following two years





A bumper 32-car field racing over 12 weekends has defied Brazil's chronic economic difficulties



of everybody running a Chevrolet, Stock Car introduced revised road-based bodykits that Giaffone estimates resulted in a 20% reduction in downforce. "We took away the front splitter and the rear splitter, and also the rear wing is smaller," he says. "The idea is to try to see the cars moving a little bit more on the TV and also just to have the cars close from what you see in the street."

According to Wilson, a series regular with Eurofarma until it cut back from three cars to two for 2020, the cars are "around three seconds slower than the old car, mostly because of the aero package," but he believes this has contributed to a condensing of the field.

"I think the car is a little bit more difficult to drive in a way because they have the same horsepower and less downforce," says Wilson, who made a brief return this year in the Full Time Sports Toyota when travel restrictions prevented Argentinian Matias Rossi from contesting the Goiania season opener. "But also because of that, the car became slower, especially on the corners. There are some drivers that are getting better results with this new-spec car compared to the old one. With this new format, it became more competitive. I'm not sure if it's because it's harder or easier to drive, but there are drivers now winning races that were not years ago."

Under the skin, however, the regulations have been stable, helping the series to thrive and keep costs down. Giaffone puts a seasonal budget at between US \$400,000-500,000 (£302,000-377,000). "It has not had too many changes in the past four or five years," he points out. "We changed just the aerodynamic side and not the physical parts



Marcos Gomes has used the series as a launchpad to international GT racing

"THEY ARE INVESTING A LOT TO BRING MORE EX-F1 DRIVERS, SO THE SERIES IS GETTING BIGGER NOW"

of the car. The car is still the same since four or five years, so the teams don't have to do any big investments every two or three years."

Those coming in from outside – a fairly regular occurrence, with Antonio Felix da Costa winning at Interlagos earlier this year when COVID-19 ruled out Mauricio – have noticed the difference. "It's not manufacturer-controlled like DTM was," says Jamie Green, who made a cameo in 2018 at a soaking wet Interlagos. "It's funded by private sponsors and run by private teams, so it's a bit more like NASCAR in that regard. It's quite cost-effective and if you can get the commercial side of it right, you can have relatively cheap cars and create good racing, and drivers can earn a good living as professionals."

For those young Brazilians who find the cost of following their F1 dreams in Europe too great, the existence of a strong domestic series means the lure of staying local is increasingly significant, with many comparing it in this respect to Australian Supercars. Wilson is in the unique position of having raced in both – the former Williams F1 tester enjoyed a seven-year spell Down Under, including briefly racing for Triple Eight. He says the two series "are quite different in a lot of ways", not least because of the huge manufacturer rivalry between Ford and Holden in Australia, and a rules set that is "a lot more open than Stock Cars".

"The [Australian] teams back in the day could build their own roll-cages, and some bits and pieces of suspension and engines – you could play with the engines and things like this which they cannot do in Stock Cars at all," says Wilson. "You cannot touch the engine or anything like that; it's quite different as far as the technical rules are concerned."

Wilson is upbeat about the progress Stock Cars has made, to the point where he believes its teams are no less professional than those found in Europe. His optimism is widely shared. "I would say it's growing again," says Giaffone. "You still have 32 cars on the grid which is very good for Brazil, and it looks like for next year we can even have more. So I think we have some good possibilities, the series is going in a good direction."

The drivers agree too. "They are investing a lot to bring more ex-F1 drivers, so the series for sure is getting bigger now," says Gomes. "We are very confident to see the Stock Car improving."

"We could see some good changes this year, especially on the marketing side," adds Serra. "I think we have a good future in front of us."

All eyes this weekend will be on the climax of the Verstappen-Hamilton soap opera in Abu Dhabi. But those who give Stock Cars a try won't be disappointed, reckons Wilson. "If you don't want to know who is going to win on any given day, you should tune in," he says. "It's very unpredictable." ❦

CHRISTMAS Gift Guide

Autosport's top picks for what motorsport fans will want under the Christmas tree this year

BOOKS

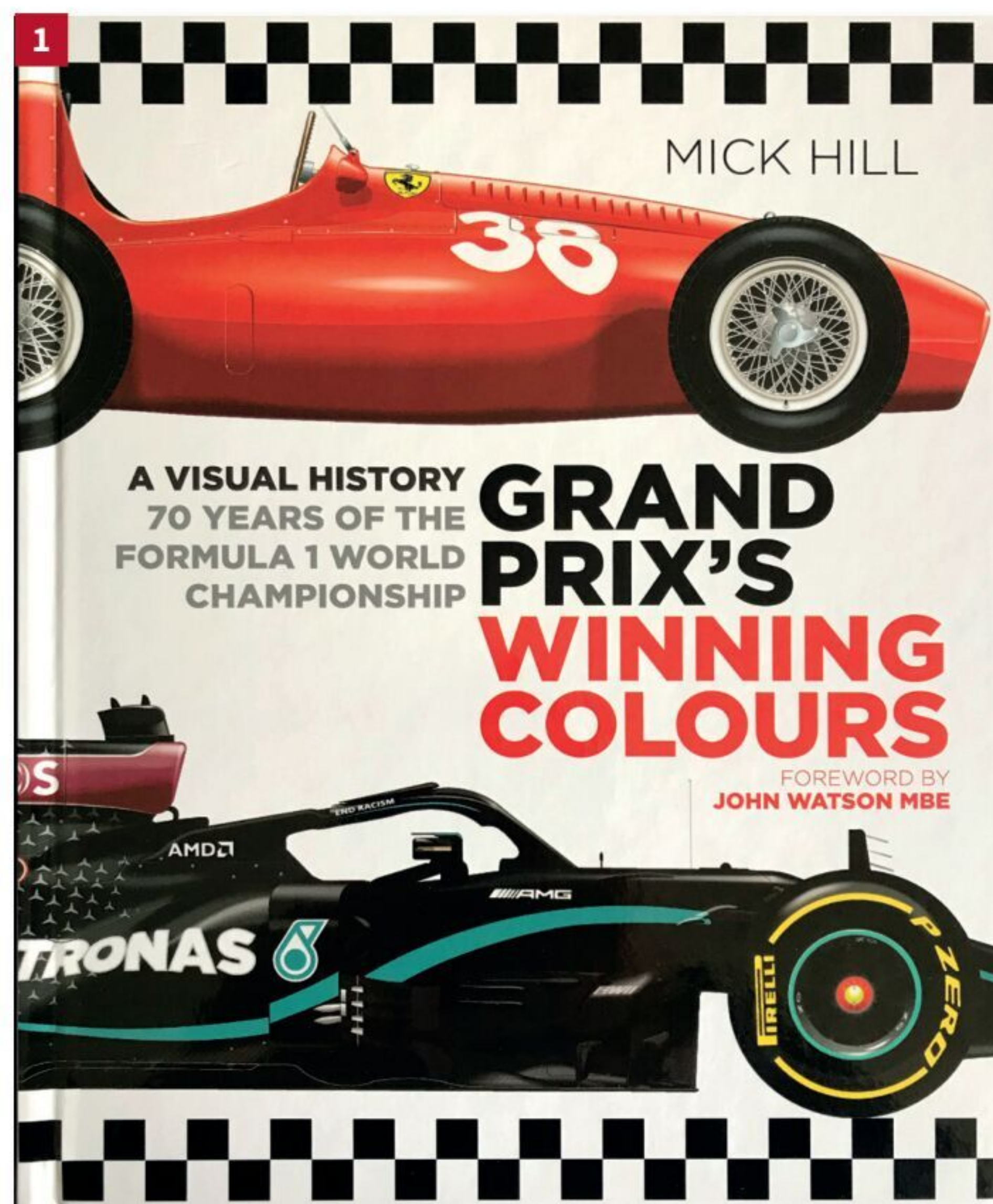
There's no shortage of motor racing books on offer every Christmas, whether it's autobiographies, in-depth analytical tomes or something else entirely.

For those relatively new to the sport, **Grand Prix's Winning Colours** is a perfect starting point, giving bite-sized stats alongside wonderful illustrations of each car to win a Formula 1 race over the past 70 years.

The Boy Stirling Moss – A Life In 60 laps from the brilliant Richard Williams offers the chance to learn more about the legend, even for those who think they know everything there is to know. Renowned motorsport writer Maurice Hamilton has also been putting pen to paper with **Murray Walker: Incredible!** – a homage to the broadcasting hero who died earlier this year.

Max Verstappen could well be on the verge of his first F1 title, and unofficial biography **Max Verstappen: The Inside Track On A Formula 1 Star** recounts the Dutchman's meteoric rise.

Nine-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner Tom Kristensen talks candidly about his successful



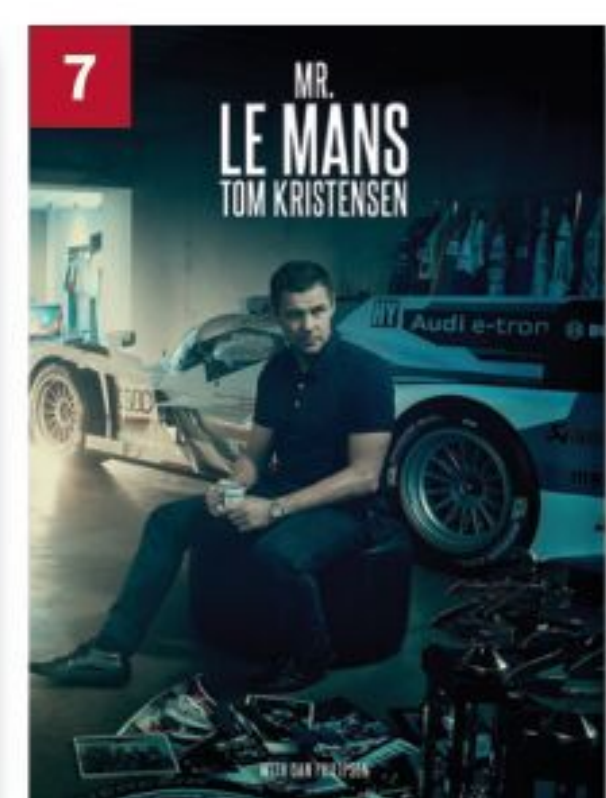
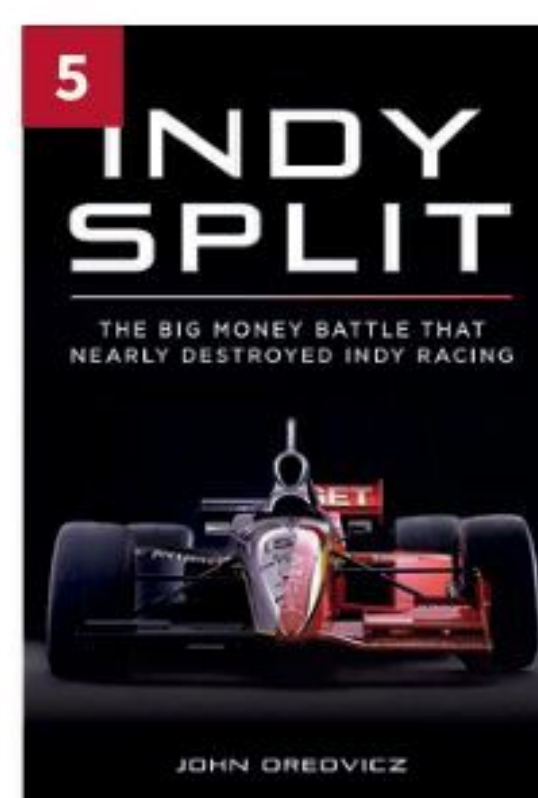
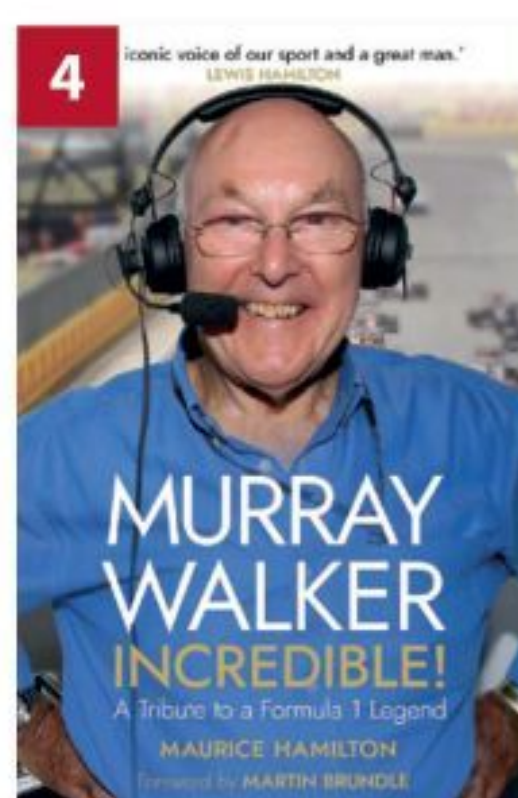
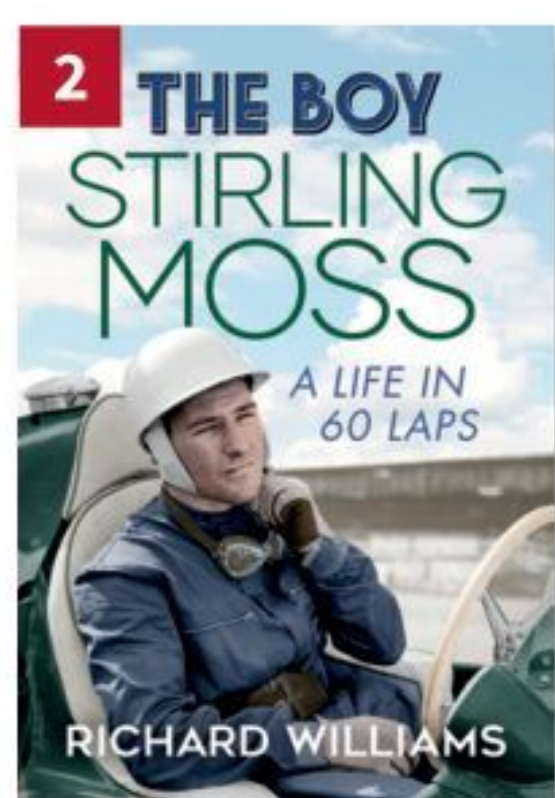
career, including the lesser-known trials and tribulations, in **Mr Le Mans: Tom Kristensen**.

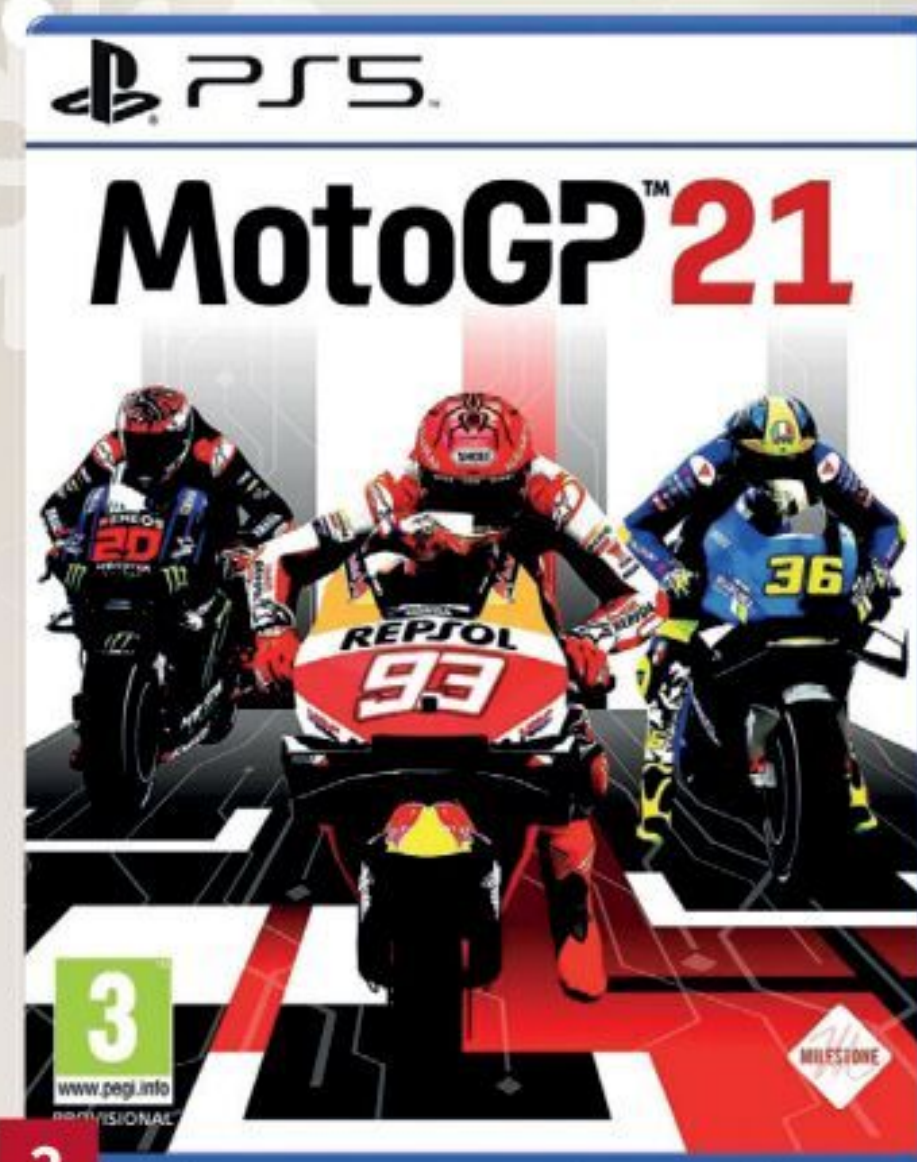
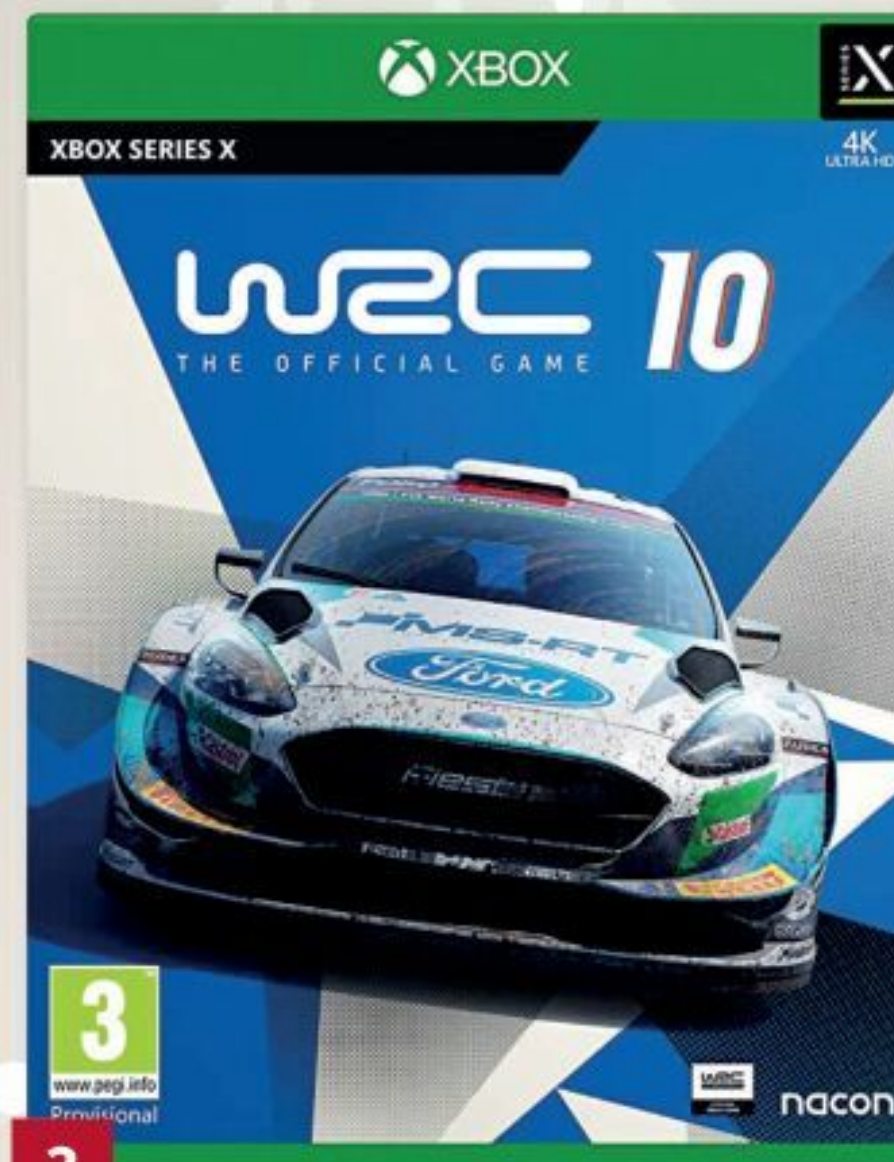
Anyone with an interest in US racing should seek John Oreovicz's **Indy Split**, which

recounts in great detail what led to one of the greatest fallouts in single-seater racing.

Formula E: Racing For The Future is an inside look at the electric championship.

- 1 GRAND PRIX'S WINNING COLOURS**
RRP £30 **Website**
thehistorypress.co.uk
- 2 THE BOY STIRLING MOSS – A LIFE IN 60 LAPS**
RRP £20 **Website**
simonandschuster.co.uk
- 3 FORMULA E: RACING FOR THE FUTURE**
RRP £35 **Website**
evropublishing.com
- 4 MURRAY WALKER: INCREDIBLE!**
RRP £20 **Website**
penguin.co.uk
- 5 INDY SPLIT**
RRP £25 **Website**
octanepress.com
- 6 MAX VERSTAPPEN: THE INSIDE TRACK ON A FORMULA 1 STAR**
RRP £15 **Website**
iconbooks.com
- 7 MR LE MANS: TOM KRISTENSEN**
RRP £40 **Website**
evropublishing.com



GAMES**1****2****3****4**

For some, Christmas day wouldn't be the same without beating your family members on one of the latest racing games available for PlayStation, Xbox or PC.

F1 2021 features the usual high-speed thrills with the current roster of drivers from both F1 and F2, and includes the new-for-2021 Jeddah circuit in Saudi Arabia.

This year's game also features story-led Braking Point, where you play

Aiden Jackson, who strives to become the greatest driver while going up against team-mate Casper Akkerman and antagonist Devon Butler.

If two-wheel action is more your thing, **MotoGP21** has you covered. Create your own team and guide them from Moto3 to the premier class, and experience one of two calendars (real-world or what the planned 2021 season would have been without COVID-19).

Prepare for plenty of opposite lock on **WRC10** as you tackle some of the world's most exhilarating stages on the World Rally Championship calendar, as well as reliving historic moments in a 50th Anniversary mode.

Or try your hand at the latest licensed NASCAR game, **Ignition**, where you can experience the flat-out speedway of Daytona or the dust clouds of Sonoma while playing as your favourite driver.

1 F1 2021
RRP £59.99 **Website**
formula1game.com

2 MOTOGP21
RRP £49.99 **Website**
motogpvideogame.com

3 WRC10
RRP £39.99 **Website**
wrcthegame.com

4 NASCAR: IGNITION
RRP £49.99 **Website**
motorsportgames.com

SILVERSTONE EVENTS

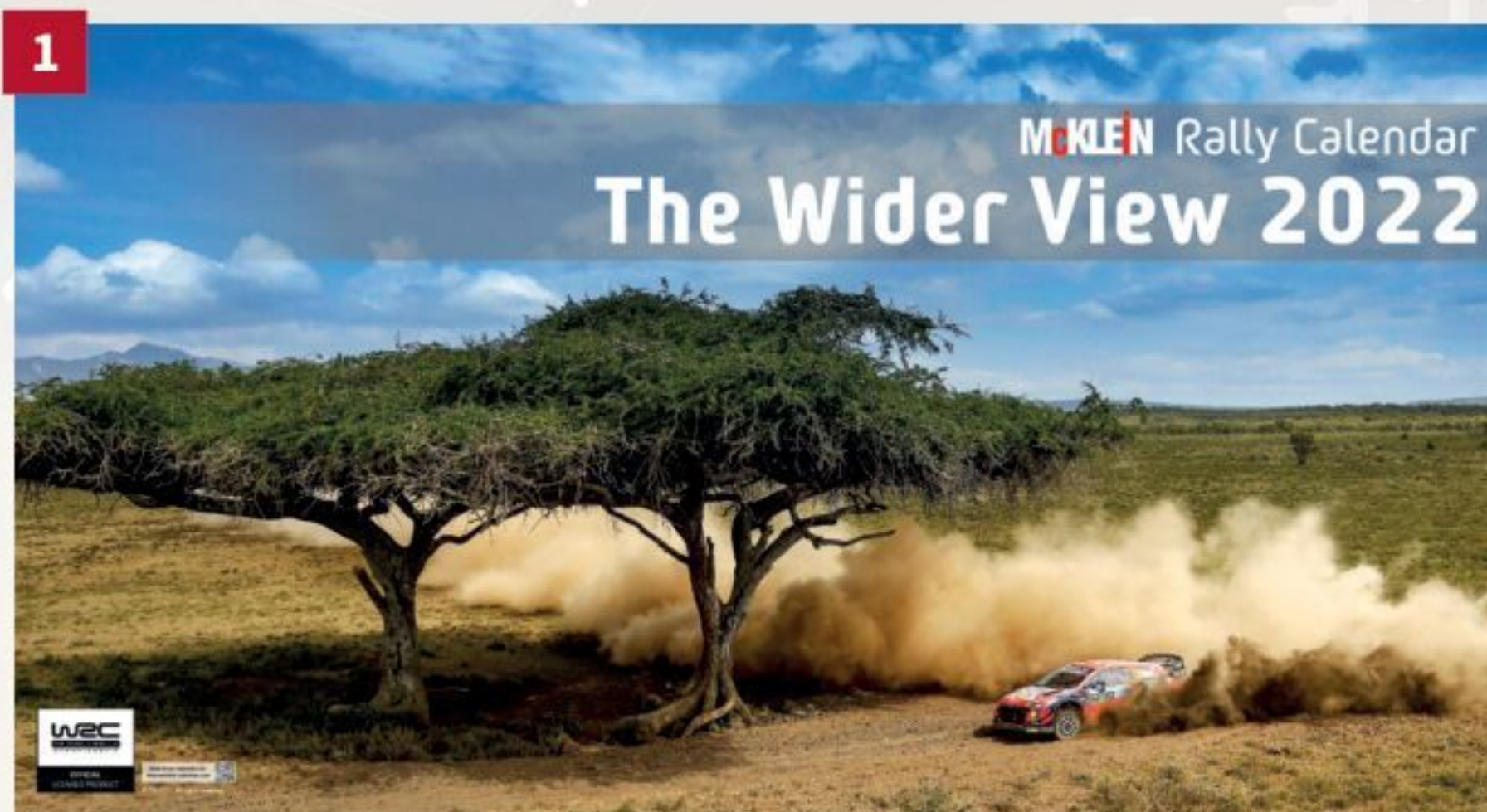
If going out and getting into the festive spirit is your thing, then Silverstone's **Lap of Lights** is the perfect chance to scratch the Christmas *and* motor racing itch. Buckle up loved ones in the family car and experience the Grand Prix circuit complete with illuminations and Santa Claus's grotto. Off-track activities include ice-skating, curling and axe-throwing, as well as festive food and drinks.

One experience accessible all year round at the circuit is the **Silverstone Interactive Museum**, which aims to preserve the history of motorsport while also inspiring the next generation of fans. Treat yourself, or gift tickets are also available.

Website Silverstone.co.uk



CALENDARS



1 **McKLEIN**
RRP €45.00 Website rallyandracing.com

Stunning widescreen-style photographs from the World Rally Championship make up the McKlein 'Wider View' 2022 calendar, with two images available per month on the 95x48cm format.



2 **JAKOB EBREY PHOTOGRAPHY**
RRP £14.50 Website ebay.co.uk

The best images from this year's British Touring Car Championship season come courtesy of the Jakob Ebrey Photography team in this A3 calendar.



TOYS

SCALEXTRIC SPARK PLUG - FORMULA E RACE SET
RRP £169.99 Website uk.scalextric.com

Take control of either the Jaguar or DS Techeetah Formula E car with this new Scalextric set featuring up to nine track layouts, and where up to 12 people can compete at once – two drivers can be supported by 10 others playing pitstop mini-games and deploying power-ups via a phone or tablet.



MOTORSPORT TICKETS

Motorsport Tickets is your go-to place for access to dozens of motorsport events around the globe including Formula 1, MotoGP and the World Endurance Championship.

With venues welcoming fans back, it could be time to buy a ticket for your loved one ahead of the 2022 season.

**COVERS TO COME****AUTOSPORT MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTION**

For more than 70 years Autosport has been the authority on motorsport, and you can enjoy a 20% discount on six months of our Autosport Print + Digital Bundle*. You'll get access to all the latest news and reaction through printed copies of the magazine, as well as access to the digital version and Plus content at autosport.com.

Website autosportmedia.com

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RIBBON: MACROVECTOR/FREEPIK

BLU-RAY/DVDS

Relive all the thrills and spills from the **British Touring Car Championship**, as Ash Sutton claimed his third title and second on the bounce with an impressive display of speed tempered by points-earning savvy.

This year's **Le Mans 24 Hours** featured the new Hypercar regulations for the first time,

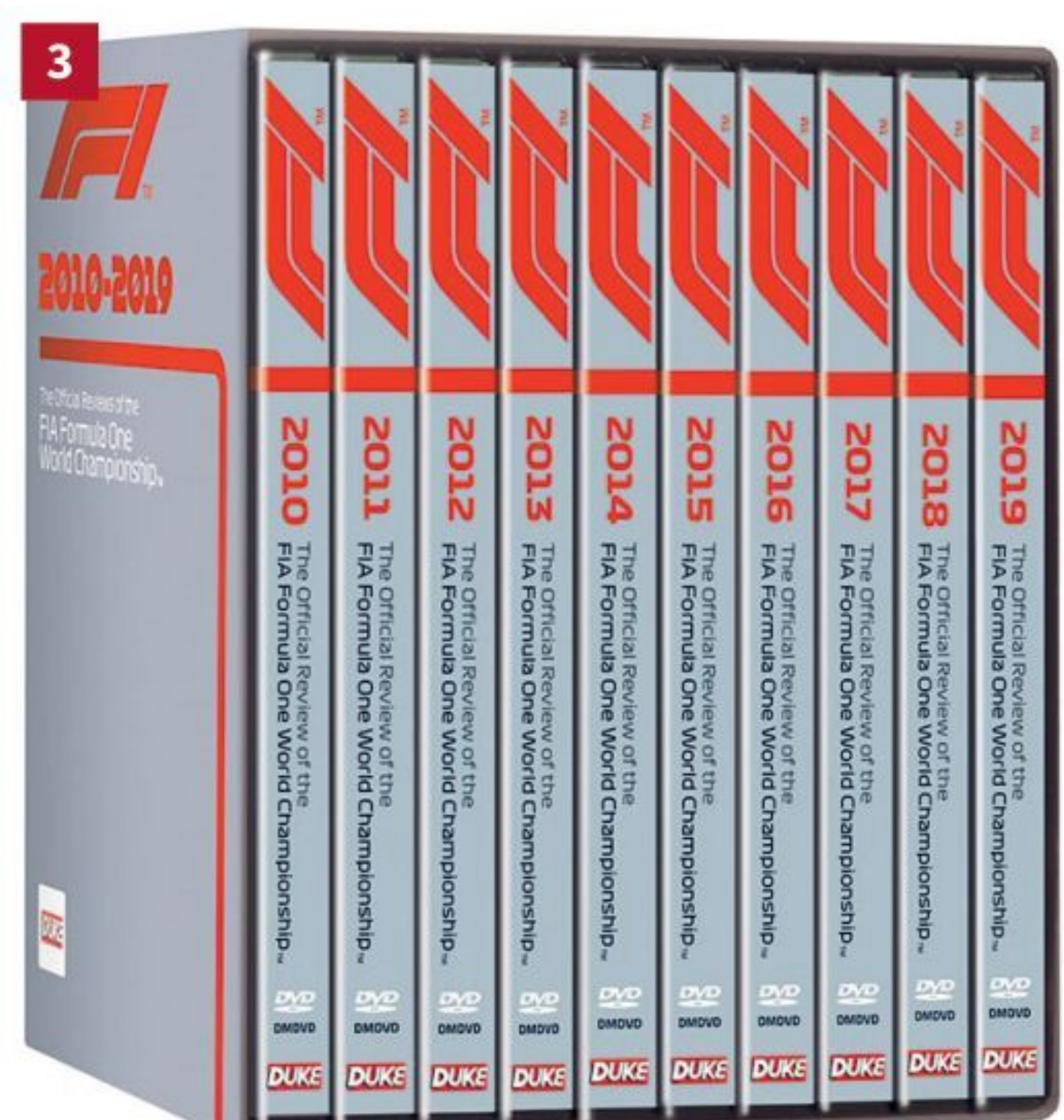
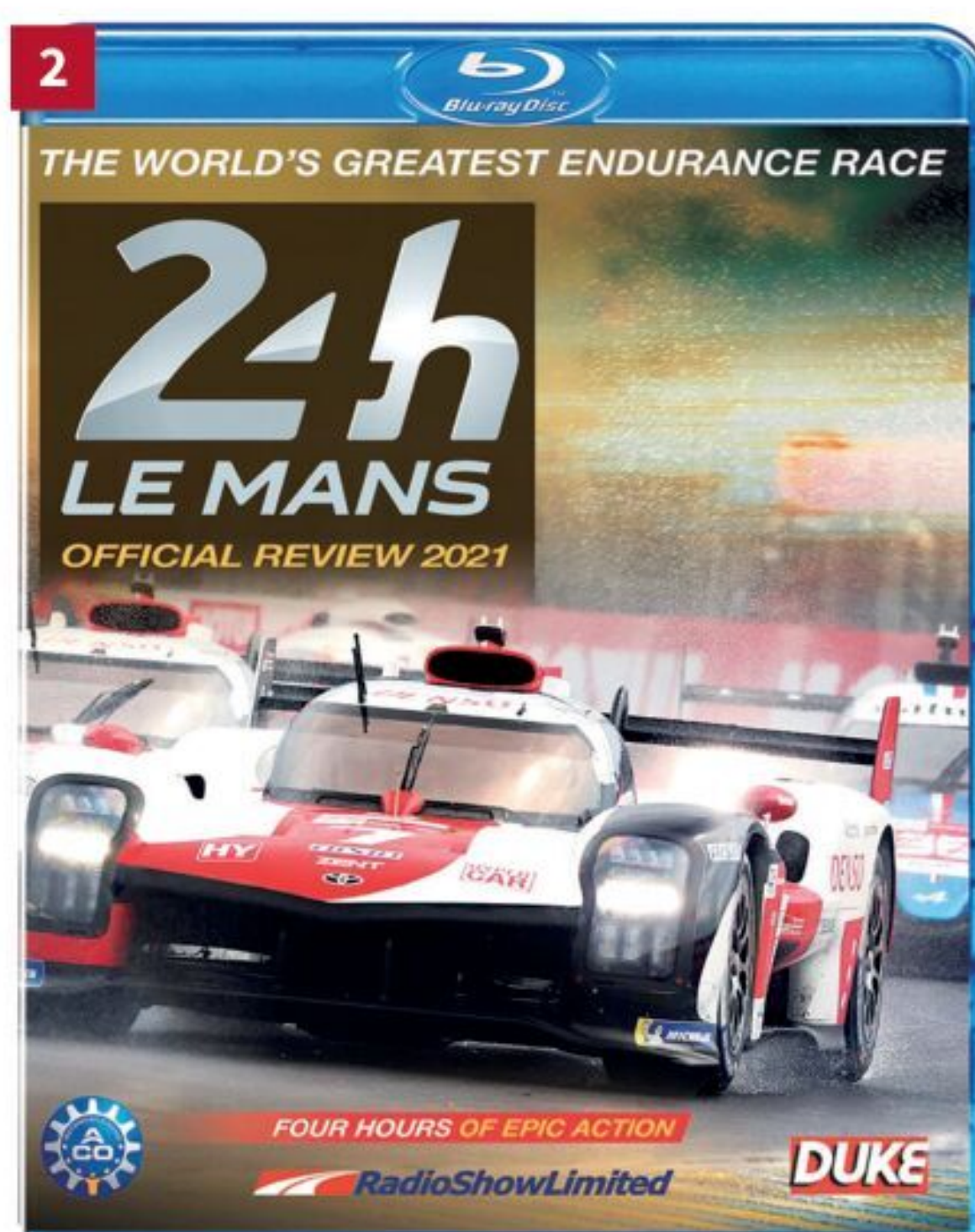
but it was a familiar name at the front as Toyota claimed another 1-2, while there was drama until the very last lap in LMP2.

For something a bit more retro, pick up the **F1 2010-19 season reviews**, featuring each race from every season, as well as exclusive footage courtesy of FOM.

1 BTCC 2021 SEASON REVIEW (DVD)
RRP £20 **Website** dukevideo.com

2 LE MANS 24 HOURS 2021 REVIEW (BLU-RAY)
RRP £20 **Website** dukevideo.com

3 F1 2010-19 SEASON REVIEWS (DVD)
RRP £99.99 **Website** dukevideo.com



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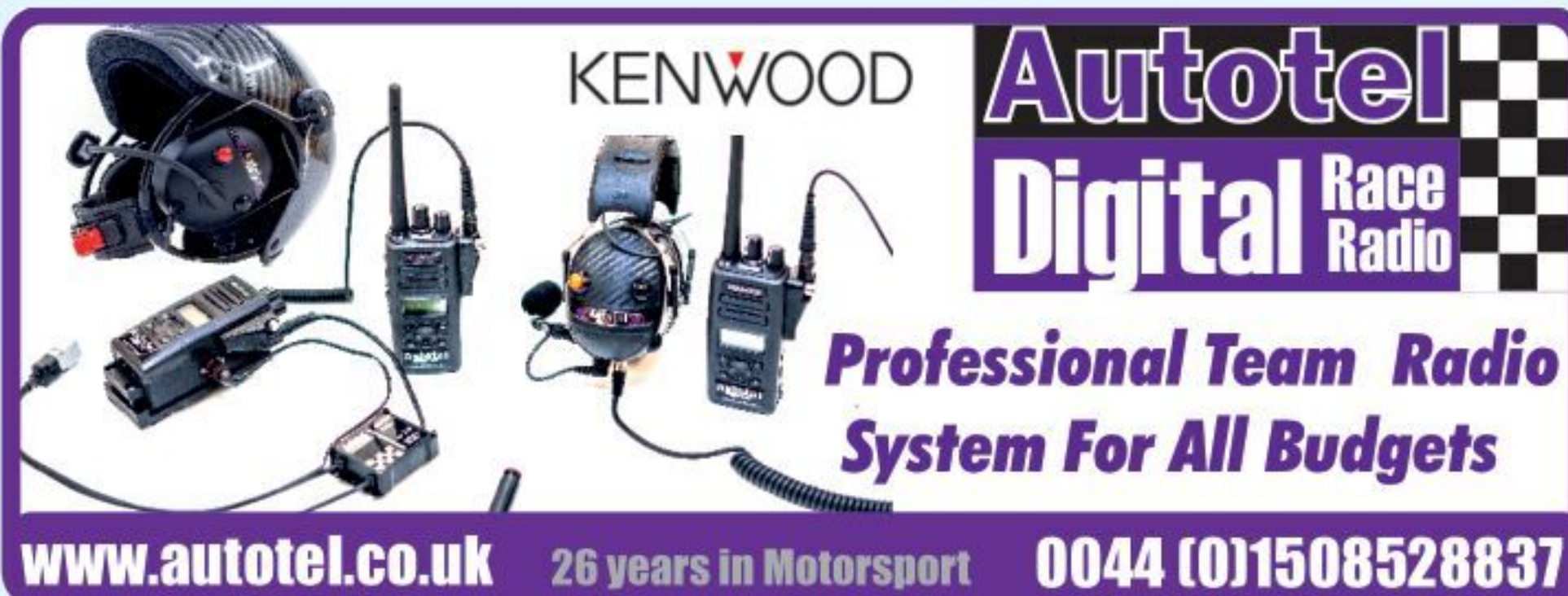
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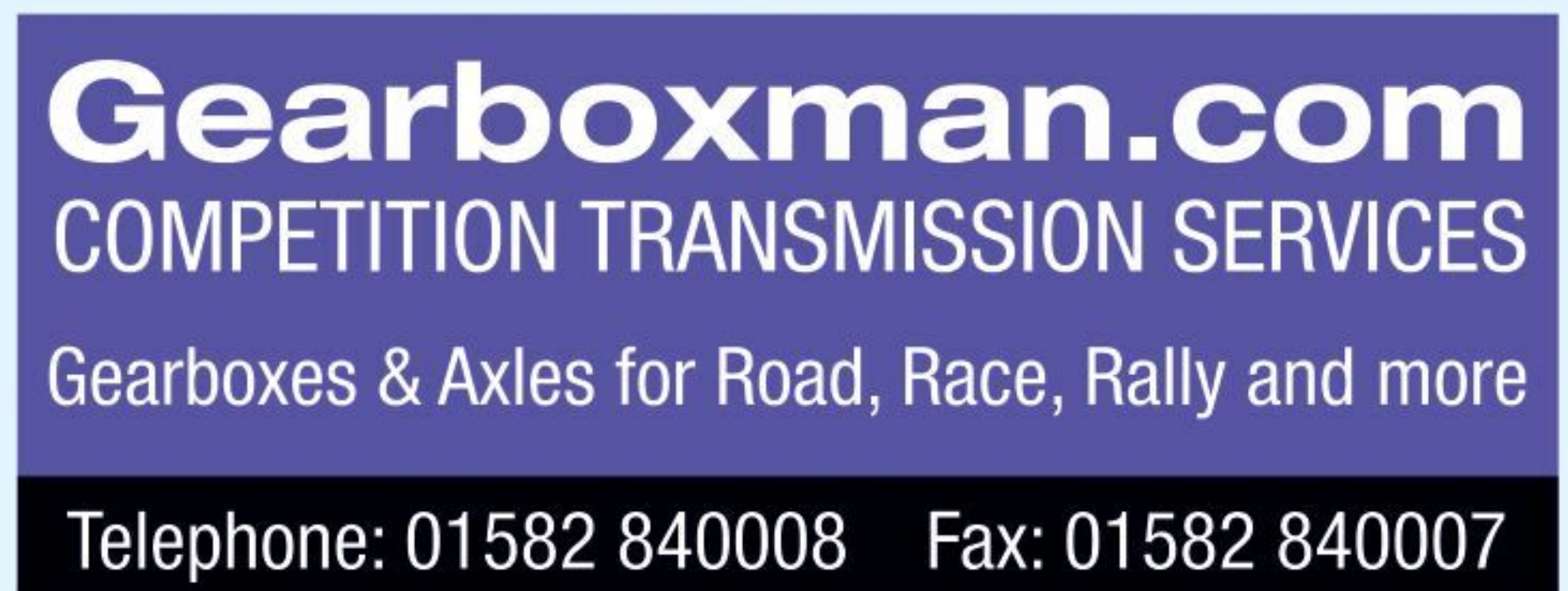


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- Oversee & Implement the construction of the garage environment at all tests and races including banner system, overhead lighting gantry, services and pit equipment.
- To ensure that all road, air and sea freight is correctly and safely loaded on-time for transportation.
- Directing the team of garage technicians during running to ensure that the team operates in an efficient, professional and safe manner at all times.
- Maintenance of all pit equipment in accordance with schedules and presentation standards.
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- Update internal stakeholders to ensure they are kept abreast of Partner initiatives and programmes
- Oversee effective budgeting, reporting and post-campaign analysis of partnership activation programmes
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- Plan, edit and write content for a variety of internal communications mediums, such as a staff intranet, monthly newsletters, or regular email bulletin and intranet.
- Lead in the collation and drafting of key documents that are significant to colleagues, including gender pay gap reports, ESG activities and major announcements.
- Ensure internal communications messages are consistent across the organisation with a personal and authentic tone of voice.
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- An understanding of CAM (ideally Hyper Mill Open Mind) would be useful but it is not essential.
- Previous experience in manufacturing high precision components, pattern work and tooling, preferably in a motorsport (especially F1) or aerospace would be beneficial
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- Ensure internal cross-functional cooperation and executive alignment
- Support marketing programme development and delivery around Esports
- Ensure accountability with regard to all relevant decision-making bodies (Esports Commission, World Motor Sport Council)
- Manage annual budget and finance reviews related to Esports, in line with the planning and budget processes
- Develop and maintain material for internal and external stakeholder engagement
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- Conduct simulator equipment & software continuous maintenance and development projects, including various vehicle or sub-system models.
- Contribute to the validation and correlation of various vehicle models to ensure validity of simulation results for both laptime and DiL functions.
- Work with the wider Race Engineering and Simulation groups to optimise the driver development program to provide best possible feedback and learning for both driver and engineering teams
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SPECIAL FEATURE How all the English racing clubs fared in 2021

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Enderby achieved considerable success in the car in the 1980s and early 1990s and is now planning a comeback

HAWKINS

DOC'S KARMANN GHIA TO RETURN

SPECIAL SALOONS

One of the most successful Special Saloons in British club racing history, Doctor David Enderby's VW Karmann Ghia clone, is set to compete again next season, having not turned a wheel in 30 years.

Enderby scored 85 class and overall wins in the car, which he last raced in 1991 and has not left his ownership.

The London anaesthetist, who started racing with an 850cc Mini in 1971, graduated through several Minis and Sunbeam Stiletto/Hillman Imp derivatives before repurposing the ex-Nick Adams/Richard Eyre Sports 2000 Tiga SC79 chassis within the Fibresports-mastered shell.

Following its transformation, designed by Enderby's pal Clive Brown, the car was initially powered by one of Brown's 1000cc Imp engines. It wowed spectators on its debut at Brands Hatch in November 1982,

but a week later was badly damaged in a first-corner shunt at the British Automobile Racing Club's Thruxton TV meeting, in which Enderby broke his ankle.

Undeterred, the combo returned in 1983, Tiga Race Cars having repaired the monocoque. It was lacking power but not handling in large fields, so Enderby installed a 1300cc Ford BDH engine for 1985, and from 1987 ran it with the current 1700cc BDA mated to the original Hewland Mk9 gearbox.

Moving up a class enabled Enderby to reconfigure the aerodynamics and run a separate F3 wing within the regulations. In this form, they won the BARC's final Special Saloon title in 1990 and the BHL Silhouettes class in 1991.

"Delays exacerbated by COVID turned a one-year project into three, but it's as close to original as current regs allow," said Enderby, who has worked alongside experienced motorsport engineer Iain

Swan of SMD Racing in Kent to get the Karmann Ghia back on track. "I'm planning to compete in the Classic Sports Car Club's Special Saloon and Modsports series."

SPECIAL SALOONS TO GOLD CUP

Special Saloons such as the Karmann Ghia will have the opportunity to compete at next year's Oulton Park Gold Cup. The CSCC's Special Saloons and Modsports competitors have been invited to race alongside a veritable pot-pourri of historic grids within a wholesale shake-up of the event, brought forward from the August Bank Holiday weekend to 29-31 July to avoid clashing with the Silverstone Classic.

While the tenet of the popular event – which continues to be run by the Historic Sports Car Club – remains resolutely historic, venue owner MotorSport Vision's "curation" of the meeting has also led to the Historic Grand Prix Cars Association, Masters, Vintage Sports-Car Club and Historic Racing Drivers Club being invited to provide a broader range of action.

The pre-'66 HGPCA races reflect the Gold Cup's heritage as a non-championship Formula 1 event first run in 1954, while Masters' Gentlemen Drivers (GT) and Touring Car sets (both for machinery of the pre-'66 era), HRDC Jack Sears Trophy 1958-'66 British Saloon Car retrospective and two grids from the VSCC join the fun.

"We are thrilled our competitors and their spectacular cars are invited to such a high-profile event – it's a focal point of the season, the cherry on the cake," said CSCC chiefs Hugo Holder and David Smitheram.

MARCUS PYE



Special Saloons and Modsports is one of a number of series to join Gold Cup event

HAWKINS

Top Carrera Cup squad Redline to run Lambo

BRITISH GT

Top Porsche Carrera Cup GB team Redline Racing will expand its operations into British GT next year after acquiring a Lamborghini Huracan GT3 Evo.

The Simon Leonard-run squad won an 11th overall Carrera Cup title this year with Dan Cammish, and will now step up to multi-class GT racing to run British GT returnee James Dorlin and Alex Malykhin in a Silver-Am entry. Factory Lamborghini driver Sandy Mitchell shook the car down at Silverstone last month.

Dorlin, the 2020 Porsche Sprint Challenge GB champion, shone in British GT as part of the McLaren Driver Development Programme in 2019. He was dogged by bad luck, but claimed a win at Brands Hatch.

The 22-year-old, who finished third in the Formula 1-supporting Porsche Sprint Challenge Middle East race in Jeddah last weekend, coached 34-year-old Belarusian Malykhin to second in the Sprint Challenge GB Am standings with Redline this year. Dorlin made a return to the series with Redline at the Donington Park finale, where he won both races. “We had a lot of bad luck in 2019 and should have been



pushing for the championship, so to get a second chance of sorts after a successful season in Sprint Challenge feels very satisfying,” he said.

Dorlin explained that Malykhin has “come on leaps and bounds since the start of the year” and was “capable of moving up straight away” to GT3, having grown comfortable in the GT4-spec Cayman used in the Sprint Challenge series.

“We’re expecting a steep learning curve – this is uncharted territory for all of us, including Redline – but I’ve no doubt we have the potential to fight against the

current frontrunners in GT3,” Dorlin added.

Malykhin said: “James has been instrumental in getting me to this point, knows all about British GT and was the class of 2020’s Sprint Challenge. What’s more, in Redline and the Lamborghini we couldn’t have a better team or a more proven car to be making the move.”

Meanwhile, as reported by Autosport (21 October), WPI Motorsport will have an unchanged line-up next year, with Michael Igoe again joined by Phil Keen aboard its GT3 Lamborghini.

JAMES NEWBOLD

Cowley to return to Europe with Academy

EUROPEAN GT4

British GT4 runner-up Matt Cowley is set to return to the GT4 European Series in 2022 in an expanded programme with Academy Motorsport and Multimatic’s Ford Mustang GT4.

Cowley, who took two British GT4 wins this year alongside Will Moore, started his GT career in Europe as part of Aston Martin Racing’s Young Driver programme, but switched to British GT in 2020 with the advent of the pandemic. With travel restrictions having eased, Cowley will lead Academy’s

assault on the continental series, and team boss Matt Nicoll-Jones believes that driver and team have unfinished business.

“The deal with Multimatic and Ford was inked well before COVID hit,” said Nicoll-Jones. “From the outset, the plan was to run a two-car campaign, in Europe and at home in British GT. With cross-Channel travel now back at a level where we can realistically manage both programmes, we’re looking forward to finally showing what Matt and the Mustang are capable of.”

Asked about driver



line-ups, Nicoll-Jones emphasised that Moore is staying with the squad but, after a successful three-season stint together, he’s now looking to find a new Silver-graded partner for Cowley.

“The priority is to find the right team-mate for Matt,” said Nicoll-Jones. “If they want to race in British GT

as well, that’s even better.”

Cowley added: “This will be my fourth GT4 season with Academy and my third in the Mustang. Together, we’ve taken huge steps forward since our first win in 2020, and we’re all now working to continue the run of form that saw us as the dominant car for the second half of 2021.”

STEVE HINDLE

British F4 also features new
Tatuus-Abarth car next year



BARC chosen as organising club for revamped British F4

BRITISH F4

The British Automobile Racing Club has been appointed as the 'local organiser' for the revamped British Formula 4 next year.

The series was previously administered by the British Racing & Sports Car Club but, when Motorsport UK took over as promoter, it planned to bring all elements of organisation in-house. In September there was a change of plan, and the governing body put out a tender for a club to have an involvement.

The BARC's winning of the tender means that all five regular support series on the BARC-run British Touring Car bill are now part of the club's portfolio.

BARC group chief executive Ben Taylor explained that its involvement would principally be around race weekends

and providing officials. "It makes a lot of sense – F4's on the TOCA bill and we've got all of the infrastructure there," he said. "We're not taking on the promotion and development of that championship – we're providing the support infrastructure around it when it gets to race meetings.

"It's an exciting new era for F4 with the new cars and Motorsport UK taking control of it. It's nice to have in the BARC stable and we will do whatever we can with our experience to help it to be a success."

Motorsport UK CEO Hugh Chambers added: "A strong organising club creates a positive, well managed environment for competitors. In a season when the championship embarks on a new era, their wealth of experience will be a valuable resource for the competitors and teams."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

IN THE HEADLINES

GREYSTONE BRANCHES OUT

The fledgling Greystone GT team plans to contest its first high-profile endurance race next month at the Gulf 12 Hours in Abu Dhabi. The GT Cup squad will field regulars Oliver Webb and Iain Campbell alongside inaugural Ferrari Challenge UK champion Jamie Clarke in a McLaren 570S GT4. "We're under no illusions – this will be the most difficult race we've ever entered against a truly international line-up of teams," said team boss Mark McLoughlin.

HENRY STAYS WITH FOX

Ginetta Junior racer Maurice Henry will continue with Fox Motorsport for a second season next year. Henry was one of two scholars selected for 2021 and took a best result of 10th. "I'm in a pretty similar place now that my team-mate Liam [McNeilly] was at the end of year one, and he was a title contender this season," said Henry. "That's where I want to be; making a big step, improving the pace and the consistency and fighting closer to the front."

PRAGA'S 'FRANK' PRIZE

Praga has announced plans to reward the owner (either team or individual) of the winning R1 in its new-for-2022 standalone Praga Cup category with the special 'Frank' model of the car as a prize. Its livery was created by renowned designer Frank Stephenson, and the R1 was raced in the Britcar Endurance series this year by Miles Lacey and influencer Mr JWW.

JAMSPORT'S SCHOLARSHIP

Top Fiesta Junior squad Jamsport will run a scholarship contest, with the winner receiving a funded drive in the series (below) next year. The chosen driver will receive a prize estimated to be worth £42,000 and includes the loan of a car, all entry and registration fees, tyres and full support on race weekends. A limited number of places are still available to take part in the shootout.



Bird glides to another rally victory

CIRCUIT RALLYING

Frank Bird and Jack Morton took their second dominant *Motorsport News* Circuit Rally Championship victory on the Dukeries Rally at Donington Park last weekend.

Bird's Fiesta was quickest on all six stages in mainly damp conditions to win by over two and a half minutes, with Cadwell Park winners Neil Roskell and Andrew Roughead (Fiesta R5) second.

On the final stage of the day,

the Darrian of Barry Morris and Tom Hutchings closed the gap on Roskell to just two seconds at the finish. "I made a wrong tyre choice on stage three and lost over 30 seconds," Roskell admitted.

After sharing fourth with Fiesta R5 pair Alistair and Colin Inglis on stage three, Ollie O'Donovan/Ashleigh Morris (Hyundai R5) consolidated the place, while Rob Hughes and Sion Cunniff (Fiesta) completed the top six.

In the classes, no one

got near Jonathan Hudson and Adi Collins (Suzuki Swift GTi) in Class A, while Class B was the domain of Chris Ruck and Steve Harris (Vauxhall Corsa Kit Car).

With Darrian pair Josh and Tamsyn Davey wrong-slotting on the opening test, and the Escort of Josh Payton and Jamie Vaughan spinning off on stage two, Phil House and Nick Beaumont (Escort) led Class C from the third stage to take the win.

PETER SCHERER

Struggling F3 Cup is axed ahead of 2022

F3 CUP

The F3 Cup Championship will not take place next year in the wake of falling grid numbers and uncertainty with competitors over which direction it should take.

Handed full championship status in 2012, it was run by MotorSport Vision Racing until the start of this year, after grid numbers had dropped to single figures and the series was a shadow of its former thriving self.

The Monoposto Racing Club took over the promotion and running of the category ahead of the 2021 season, introducing a Euro F3 class that was open to cars complying with 2018-19 Euroformula Open regulations, while the F3 Cup class was for cars built between 2008-16.

Under the Monoposto Racing Club – which attracts full grids for its Monoposto Championship – it was hoped entries would increase but indecisiveness among



competitors about what form F3 Cup should take going forward means it will no longer continue in 2022.

“They couldn’t agree how they wanted to do it,” said Monoposto Club coordinator Rachel Lovett. “Some of them wanted it more like Radical weekends, and others wanted it to be more club level like we have with Monoposto. It fell apart and some decided to do nothing but that happened quite last-minute. The group

who wanted to do it at the club level came to Monoposto asking if they could join us.

“It was too late to get it into our regulations but we have allowed them to join the Tiedeman Trophy as invitational entries. It’s going to be more of a test next year to see how they compare against the Mono F3s but then we can look to have them join us for 2023. It’s a big shame, it would have been good to continue F3 Cup.”

STEFAN MACKLEY

Push to revive Formula Atlantic series in UK

HISTORICS

A Formula Atlantic double-header will take place at the Historic Sports Car Club’s season opener at Brands Hatch next year ahead of the series being revived in the UK.

It’s hoped the event, scheduled for 2-3 April, could be the long-awaited catalyst for growth of the 1600cc category on the historic stage.

Britain’s version of the USA’s Ford twin-cam powered Formula B was

promoted as FAtlantic when it debuted in 1971, aptly at Brands, with the race won by Australian Vern Schuppan in the prototype Palliser WD3.

With Iain Rowley – one half of the team behind Historic Formula Ford 2000, which has thrived since 2007 – back in the driving seat as chairman, confidence is growing that FAtlantic will fulfil its potential once more.

“Four new Atlantic owners and drivers have contacted me in the past few days alone, and more cars are in

preparation and coming back to Britain,” said Rowley, who races an ex-Howdy Holmes March 78B.

“Historic Formula Atlantic is now registered with Motorsport UK and fellow car owners are equally determined to grow it. The Brands date and an invitation to Rob Manger’s Classic Racing Car Club Jochen Rindt Trophy races at Thruxton on 11-12 June [with two-litre F2 excluded] offer exciting times ahead.”

MARCUS PYE

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Reflections on the racing season

Alongside a general increase in grid sizes, there were other interesting trends to emerge in 2021, but it's important that clubs don't take the positivity for granted

STEPHEN LICKORISH

For a club racing season that began with such uncertainty, the end result was an unexpected surprise. With the coronavirus pandemic leading to the familiar scenario of events being cancelled at the start of the year, there was concern about what 2021 had in store. Many feared the real economic impact of COVID-19 would bite this year, after the initial shock in 2020. And yet the season ended with some impressive grid sizes, as you can read about over the next eight pages.

The British Automobile Racing Club was among those organisers fearing another difficult year. "We went into this year in lockdown and didn't know really what the world was going to throw at us for the next 12 months," recalls group chief executive Ben Taylor. "Our objective at the start of the year was to be in no worse position at the end of 2021 as we were in 2020. We saw this year as really a protection year – we thought it was batten down the hatches. Actually, it's been one of the best years ever."

You can read about some of the specific successes the club has enjoyed this year on page 72. But for the BARC – or any organiser – to achieve large grids has meant a lot of hard work behind the scenes amid ever-changing rules and advice as the pandemic situation has altered. "Everybody I've come across is exhausted mentally, physically and emotionally, in some cases, and I think that's the two years of COVID that's left uncertainty and

"Everybody has adapted so bloody well to everything that's been thrown at them"

constantly changing your plans and protocols," continues Taylor. "Everybody has adapted so bloody well to everything that's been thrown at them and rolled up their sleeves and got on with it. From marshals, to officials, to clerks and medics and rescue teams, they all mucked in and got on with it and did a brilliant job."

At this time of year, it's important to reflect on the efforts of everyone involved in running race meetings, who coped with the difficult situation so admirably. And it's appropriate to praise those organisers who did particularly well over the past 12 months, as we have done over the following pages.

In the process of gathering the data needed to work out those average grid sizes, several other trends also emerged. The first was a greater variance between the number of entries from one

event to the next. "The evidence seems to be that people do want to cherry-pick events – they look at their budget, the dates and where they might want to be," notes Historic Sports Car Club CEO Andy Dee-Crowne. "If you're a middle-of-the-pack individual, so you've got no chance of winning a championship with the HSCC, you might look elsewhere – and we've got to cater for that."

This was first noticed last year when the pandemic meant the season was essentially condensed into four months. Some competitors therefore put aside long-standing ties to particular clubs and wanted to race anywhere and everywhere; others were more specific and perhaps only raced at their local venue to cut down on travelling. That trend has continued into this year, even when the world has gradually begun to open back up. The best example of this is the Classic Sports Car Club. Admittedly, the fact that its series do not have championship status means there is not quite the same incentive for drivers to appear at every single round, but the club found itself going from long lists of reserves at Donington Park to markedly lower grids at Cadwell Park.

That theme ties in with another key trend – the popularity of arguably the three most famous circuits in the UK: Silverstone, Brands Hatch and Donington Park. Discarding the regional categories, 49 English series had their highest grid size of the year at Silverstone, 41 at Brands and 36 at Donington. The next highest was Snetterton on 15, and no other circuit made it into double figures.

Now, it must be considered that the trio of current/former grand prix circuits appear on the majority of club racing schedules (only 13 UK-wide series did not visit Brands this year, for example) and these wide, open venues do also permit a higher number of starters than others. Even so, these figures still show there can be no disputing that the so-called "bucket-list tracks" are drawing in the crowds, although clubs need to be careful to avoid becoming over-reliant on them. By contrast, Snetterton leads the way as the location where categories had their lowest grids – on 21 and just ahead of Cadwell Park – but these were far more evenly distributed, with nine tracks into double figures.

But, for all the positives to take from the past 12 months, this is absolutely no time to be complacent. The past few weeks have shown that the threat of coronavirus has not gone away. And the ever-growing calls for the abandonment of fossil fuels mean an even greater threat to national motorsport could be on the horizon. That is why it's vital that clubs continue to work hard, look to the future and be as best-placed as possible to ensure that 2022 can be another successful year. 🏁

➡ P70 CLUB RACING'S SUCCESSFUL 2021

How club racing thrived during 2021

The pandemic led to huge uncertainty heading into the season but, with two-thirds of all English categories enjoying an increase in average entries, it proved to be a successful year

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Looking at the average grid size of a series is a crude way of measuring its success. There are many other factors that truly determine how well a category is doing, but the number of cars on the grid is certainly most quantifiable.

And that's why Autosport has run this feature at the end of the past few seasons. When it was first published in November 2019, no one could have predicted what the following two years would bring. The global pandemic has led to uncertainty on so many levels and yet, despite COVID-19 continuing to have an impact on our way of life, club racing has proven remarkably resilient.

Yes, the start of the 2021 season had to be delayed but, once under way, grids were packed. Out of the 110 English series with comparable data (Scottish, Northern Irish and Irish classes are not included as it is

unfair to compare them when they have a smaller pool of drivers to draw from), 75 had an increase in average participants or stayed the same – a truly incredible 68%.

That does not mean the past year was a success across the board. A glance at the average grid size for each club reveals that many have gone down slightly, although a reason for this in some cases is that series were paired up to create large fields in 2020 when track time was at a premium. There were also five categories with an average of fewer than 10 starters. But, encouragingly, as clubs show realism, the majority of these struggling series are to be scrapped or undergo major changes next season.

In contrast, a brilliant 16 categories had average grids of over 35 cars. And we have to thank the club staff, officials, marshals and volunteers who pulled together in a world of ever-changing regulations to make such successes possible.



750 Motor Club

The 750 Motor Club considers itself to be the 'home of affordable motorsport', and that message was proving more popular than ever this year. The club boasted the highest average grid size of all the major organisers at 27 cars, and it was no surprise that it topped the charts given that seven of its series typically had entries of 30 or more drivers.

The club's competitions manager Giles Groombridge believes there are a number of factors behind the large grids, but admits he did not know what to expect heading into the season amid the lingering uncertainty from the pandemic. "Nobody knew what the economic fallout of the pandemic was going to be or if there were going to be curveballs thrown by regulations and restrictions," he says. "It was hard to predict, but I think club motorsport benefited from people not being able to spend their money elsewhere.

"After the partial season of 2020, it was a really good year commercially and from a competitive perspective. We made an effort to keep our entry fees affordable and, with our calendar, we try and get the spacing of events





Club Enduro led the 750MC's pack, averaging a stunning grid of 46 cars in 2021

GRID SIZES

SERIES	2021 AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 2020
Club Enduro	46	+12%
Roadsports	41	-5%
Hot Hatch	39	+34%
Toyota MR2**	38	0%
MX-5 Cup	35	-3%
Formula Vee	31	+19%
BMW Car Club Racing	30	+3%
Armed Forces Race Challenge	27	N/A
Locost	27	-7%
Sport Specials	27	+23%
116 Trophy	26	-4%
Type R Trophy	26	+189%
Classic Stock Hatch	23	+21%
Bernie's Sports Racing & V8s*	22	N/A
F1000	22	+5%
Alfa Romeo	21	+11%
CALM All Porsche Trophy*	21	N/A
Historic 750 Formula	21	+5%
Clio 182	20	+5%
Ma7da	20	+25%
750 Formula	19	+36%
Bikesports	18	-18%
Sports 1000	16	+23%
CLUB AVERAGE	27	+13%

Note *Shared a grid with another series at one or more rounds, but figures are based on each series individually **Split over two or more different grids

just right for the different championships. With the technical regulations, we keep things affordable and prevent excessive development, so I think they are key factors.”

It was Club Enduro that led the way with an incredible average of 46 cars – the most of any championship that did not split into two grids. “You see it from budget stuff like Ka racing to Club Enduro that the longer-race format that gives people a bit more seat time is very popular,” says Groombridge.

While Club Enduro continued its success from last year, taking a leap forward was Hot Hatch as its entries increased by a third after rule tweaks paid off. “We changed the class structure and did away with the old Class A, which was quite expensive to be competitive in, made Class B the new Class A and added a new Class B in the middle, targeting stuff like Clio 197s,” explains Groombridge.

But the category to enjoy the largest increase in numbers was the Type R Trophy. This had struggled to get into double figures in its first two seasons, but its potential was realised this year when grids nearly trebled

to average 26 cars. It attracted 750MC aces Adam Shepherd and Lee Deegan alongside racing newcomers. “We did a foundation programme where people got a car and all their entry fees and race kit for a fixed price, which was really popular,” adds Groombridge.

But there were a few series that did struggle a little in comparison. One of these was Bikesports, which was regularly in the mid-teens. “Bikesports has never been as large as some of our championships – generally sports-racer cars don’t tend to be,” reckons Groombridge. “We had fewer guest entries from the Radical championship, which quite often top up the Bikesports grid with people dovetailing both for a bit of testing or a bit of extra racing.”

That aside, Groombridge is perfectly justified in describing 2021 as an “excellent year” for the 750MC, but that does not mean the club is resting on its laurels. It is continuing to evolve where necessary, such as adding a greater range of models to its Clio championship, to ensure that its ‘affordable motorsport’ remains popular.



Introduction of the new Fiesta ST240 has given BRSCC category a boost in 2021

British Racing & Sports Car Club

The British Racing & Sports Car Club has undergone something of a transformation over the past few seasons. Since a new management structure was appointed at the end of 2019, various elements of the club's offering have been refreshed and countless new initiatives started. Looking at the 2022 portfolio is a perfect demonstration of this. Out of the 25 categories, 13 are either brand new, feature a new car, or have been revitalised or renamed in recent years.

"The BRSCC is a changed animal over the past three or four years," says Greg Graham, part of the 'new' management as head of formulae development. "We look closely at our own portfolio and what we've got." Club chairman Peter Daly adds: "Our new management have been working incredibly hard in two COVID-affected seasons, and there's been a lot of focus on customer service and delivering good races."

And that work is clearly paying off. For example, the Clubsport Trophy and CityCar Cup contests introduced over the past few years are towards the top of the club's average entries table. "We've introduced CityCar Cup because we hadn't got any real feeder series to bring in novice drivers," explains Daly. "We've got Formula Ford and Mazdas but they're both very competitive and require a lot of skill.

CityCar Cup offers a lower-cost introduction." Open to race-developed Citroen C1s, Peugeot 107s and Toyota Aygos, it attracted 38 cars for its opening round this year, its first after securing championship status.

Alongside these additions, the BRSCC has also given a boost to some of its existing categories. The turnaround in Fiesta Junior – tripling from pathetic five-car grids in 2019 – has been significant and is set to continue with the introduction of a new car next year, while the flagging senior Fiesta championship has been boosted by the ST240 machine coming on board.

This work has not gone unnoticed, with a number of existing categories and independent organisers entering partnerships with the club. One example is Modified Fords, which enjoyed a 53% boost in entries after teaming up with the BRSCC this year.

And perhaps the crown jewel was the Formula Ford Festival. The BRSCC pulled out all the stops for the landmark 50th edition, securing the largest entry for decades and enticing the likes of Roberto Moreno and Jan Magnussen to take part. "We're wanting to keep that momentum and are in talks about enhancing the National Formula Ford championship," explains Daly. "We struggled a little bit with numbers this year because of COVID and we missed out on a couple of Belgian drivers and some of the Irish guys, who couldn't do the early part of the season."

Daly is quick to acknowledge that not everything was a roaring success and points out that some of the Caterham championships, notably the top Seven UK category, struggled at a time when there are plenty of other places for these cars to race. "I think the product is excellent and it's an excellent championship, but it's dominated by teams and the teams will move around," he says.

While the BRSCC's overall average grid size

GRID SIZES		
SERIES	2021 AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 2020
MX-5 Supercup	37	+12%
MX-5 Championship	36	-29%
Clubsport Trophy	32	+3%
Compact Cup	30	-14%
CityCar Cup	27	+125%
British GT	26	+4%
Modified Fords**	26	+53%
Caterham Seven 270R	25	N/A
MX-5 Clubman	25	N/A
ST-XR Challenge	24	+9%
Caterham Academy White*	23	-12%
Fun Cup	23	0%
Caterham Academy Green*	22	+10%
Caterham Roadsport	22	N/A
Fiesta	18	+20%
British Formula 4	17	+31%
Caterham Seven 310R*	17	N/A
National Formula Ford 1600*	17	N/A
Northern & Super Classic Formula Ford 1600*	17	N/A
Fiesta Junior	14	+8%
Caterham Seven UK*	13	N/A
CLUB AVERAGE	23	-8%

Note All figures only apply to UK rounds and include series that had at least four race events. *Shared a grid with another series at one or more rounds, but figures are based on each series individually
****** Split over two or more different grids



MX-5s remain popular even with creation of Mk1 Clubman series

decreased in 2021, much of this is down to several categories that were merged in the shortened 2020 campaign getting standalone grids again. Traditionally the most popular of all UK championships, the Mk1 Mazda MX-5 entries were down a chunk as a new budget single-day Clubman category was created to run alongside it. And that's just another example of how the 'new-look' BRSCC is tailoring series to meet its customers' needs.

MotorSport Vision Racing

Attracting new drivers into the sport is important for every club, and MotorSport Vision Racing has been particularly successful at this over the years via its MotorSport Vision Trackdays division. And 2021 was no different as MSVT categories generated huge amounts of interest – three of its categories are in the top four of MSVR's average entries leaderboard.

EnduroKa goes from strength to strength, while the Trackday Championship and Trackday Trophy also benefited from increased numbers. Only the Supercup decreased (still at a strong 26 cars on average, albeit grid sizes were much smaller than this on several occasions) and it will undergo a revamp next year, merging with the Elise Trophy and being renamed Turismo X.

"They [MSVT series] form a big part of what we do, and bringing new people into the sport is so important, not just for us but the industry as a whole," explains MSVR competitions manager Joe East. "It's been a mission of MSVR since our very early days to help grow the number of licence holders. To see these same drivers then progress into other MSVR series and to championships with other clubs highlights the importance



GT Cup has enjoyed a surge in popularity this year

HAWKINS



The MotorSport Vision Trackday series have attracted large grids

WALKER

of the MSVT series further. Stuart Garland oversees all the MSVT series and has done a brilliant job in growing them while retaining a real sense of fun and camaraderie among all the teams and drivers."

Aside from the MSVT series, two categories enjoyed impressive growth of over 60%. The Porsche Club Championship thrived during its first season under MSVR's wing, while the GT Cup enjoyed unprecedented popularity, attracting a stellar cast list among its average 37-car grid.

"GT Cup had a fantastic 2021 season and the promoters, Bute Motorsport, work tirelessly behind the scenes to create a really slick, polished product," says East. "Every championship is judged on its success by the average grid size, but something I especially like about GT Cup is the friendly paddock atmosphere that the organisers have created. The racing is close up and down the field, it's a joy to watch, and it's a pleasure to host them at our race events."

The Clubmans Sports Prototype and

Sports 2000 series were other success stories, but not all categories fared quite so well. The new 911 Challenge for 1970s and 1980s Porsches mustered just seven cars on average, but East is confident that those numbers will improve. "It's been particularly affected by the pandemic and ongoing travel restrictions, which have limited the number of overseas drivers," he says. "We're optimistic numbers will grow quickly as we learn to live with the virus."

The Ferrari Challenge UK was also in single figures last year, but rebounded a little in 2021. East expects this to continue next year, feeling it is another series hard hit by COVID-19 restrictions.

Alongside the Supercup, the Champion of Brands and Heritage Formula Ford categories are also undergoing a revamp for 2022, forming the new United Formula Ford championship as MSVR continues to be proactive in ensuring its offering is as attractive as possible – to existing and new competitors.



The introduction of more MGs has helped Cockshoot Cup grids

WALKER

MG Car Club

When the pandemic struck last year, the MG Car Club consulted with its drivers about whether or not its categories should run as championships over its three remaining events or be non point-scoring series. In the end, it had three of each, but it was notable that grid sizes were down. But, with championship status restored, there was an almost universal increase in entries for 2021, notably in the MG Trophy, which was boosted by 50% as average numbers returned to pre-pandemic levels.

The club did have a bit of a false start when its first-ever planned event on the Silverstone International layout had to be

Classic Sports Car Club

For the past two years, the Classic Sports Car Club has enjoyed the highest average grid size of the main organisers. But, despite being knocked off top spot in 2021 and the table (below) showing a lot of red, it's easy to see why club director David Smitheram describes it as a "really good" year on track.

Take the May visit to Donington Park, which attracted over 500 entries in the build-up, although numbers dropped back slightly when reserves withdrew. Also, it secured a truly remarkable 348 for its Silverstone Grand Prix circuit fixture – a club record for a one-day meeting.

But there are two key reasons why grid sizes, overall, were slightly lower than in the past and have skewed the averages. First, a maiden club visit to Knockhill did not prove popular, with some tiny entries received. "The people who went loved it, but it lost us money," admits Smitheram.

Also, the club booked slightly less track time for 2021. "When we were talking to all the circuits, this was before vaccines were out and we erred on the side of caution," Smitheram explains. "We took on less track time anticipating slightly smaller grids and did quite a few combined races, meaning we had some very large reserves." The CSCC has bought more dates than ever before for 2022 to avoid repeating that headache.

Smitheram picks out the club's newest offering, the Slicks Series, as being one of

the highlights. "We launched it in 2020 and it was the worst time to launch a series," he says. "The grids have got better and better and that last round at Silverstone brought out cars we've not seen before – there were Ferraris, a Mosler, a McLaren and a Dodge Viper." The CSCC will be hoping that momentum now continues into next year.

GRID SIZES

SERIES	2021 AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 2020
EnduroKa	40	+8%
GT Cup	37	+61%
Trackday Championship	36	+9%
Trackday Trophy	36	+24%
Porsche Club*	32	+60%
7 Race Series: 420R*	31	N/A
Mini Challenge Trophy	31	+11%
Clubmans Sports Prototype	28	+33%
Sports 2000	28	+22%
7 Race Series: 1600*	26	N/A
MSV Supercup	26	-16%
Racing Saloons & Production Golf & Production BMW*	24	N/A
GB3	18	0%
Focus Cup	18	+20%
Radical Challenge*	17	+21%
Champion of Brands Formula Ford 1600	15	-29%
Elise Trophy	14	-22%
Radical SR1 Cup*	14	-7%
Ferrari Challenge UK	13	+44%
Production GTI*	13	N/A
Z Cars & New Generation Production BMW*	11	N/A
Heritage Formula Ford 1600*	9	-40%
911 Challenge*	7	N/A
CLUB AVERAGE	23	-4%

Note All figures only apply to UK rounds and include series that had at least four race events *Shared a grid with another series at one or more rounds, but figures are based on each series individually

GRID SIZES

SERIES	2021 AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 2020
Swinging Sixties**	46	-2%
Magnificent Sevens*	33	0%
Tin Tops*	32	-18%
Future Classics*	24	-20%
Classic K*	22	-33%
Modern Classics*	21	-9%
Special Saloons & Modsports*	20	0%
Slicks Series*	19	N/A
New Millennium*	17	N/A
Turbo Tin Tops*	17	-15%
Open Series*	15	N/A
CLUB AVERAGE	24	-25%

Note *Shared a grid with another series at one or more rounds, but figures are based on each series individually **Split over two or more different grids



cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. "We had an incredibly disappointing start to the year, where our first round was cancelled – after 2020, we thought we had that behind us – but, after that, the season went very, very well and, like a lot of clubs, we saw there was some pent-up demand and people wanted to come racing," says race competitions secretary Mark Baulch.

The Cockshoot Cup was a particular success, topping the club's entry charts. "It was definitely helped by the reintroduction of the MGF Cup, which was due to the hard work by [coordinator] Paul Goodman and [MGCC driver] David Coulthard – they put a lot of effort into promoting that and finding cars and drivers," says Baulch.

There was also an impressive boost for the Metro Cup, despite the increasing scarcity of parts and cars, but the MG Cup did struggle a little, rising by less than the other series. "A lot of those guys are self-employed running their own business and were impacted by the pandemic," explains Baulch. But he is optimistic for a turnaround in 2022, with over 30 cars already registered for next year.

Baulch describes next season as being a "consolidation year" as the club runs more one-day meetings following long-time guest Equipe Classic Racing's decision to run its own events. The MGCC will make a long-awaited return to Cadwell Park as Baulch had "been wanting to bring something back or bring something new" to the schedule.

GRID SIZES

SERIES	2021 AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 2020
Cockshoot Cup*	24	+26%
BCV8	22	-12%
MG Trophy	21	+50%
Midget & Sprite Challenge*	19	+12%
Metro Cup*	17	+21%
MG Cup*	16	+7%
CLUB AVERAGE	20	+18%

Note All figures include series that had at least four events *Shared a grid with another series at one or more rounds, but figures are based on each series individually



Historic Sports Car Club

One of the most significant impacts of the coronavirus pandemic has been on overseas travel, and that has brought positives and negatives for UK clubs. The Historic Sports Car Club is among those to have seen both sides of this situation: some of its series have been boosted by drivers remaining on home soil, while others have missed out on the influx of racers from Europe and beyond.

Guards Trophy was one of the club's most



popular categories this year, and HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne believes COVID-19 was a factor. "The cars can be very valuable and those people tend to have other cars as well, and some of them would've normally done the foreign events," he says. "People have looked at that and have said, 'We'll spend our budget in the UK and let's not even think about going abroad.' We've also been investing time in Guards and put a lot of planning into it."

In contrast, Aurora Trophy was among those to miss out on additional competitors. "There was a time we were fielding 15 or so F5000s when the Australians and New Zealanders came in the summer to the UK, and that's all gone," continues Dee-Crowne.

Overall, it was a strong year for the HSCC, with several of its championships enjoying a slight increase in entries, and those that declined were only by a small percentage. The club continues to evolve, with its new

GRID SIZES

SERIES	2021 AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 2020
Formula Junior**	33	+22%
Historic Formula Ford 2000**	32	-6%
Guards Trophy	27	+8%
Historic Formula Ford 1600	27	+17%
Historic Road Sports	27	-10%
70s Road Sports*	26	-7%
Classic Formula Ford 1600*	20	-5%
Classic Formula 3 & Classic Formula Ford 2000*	19	N/A
Historic Touring Cars*	19	-21%
Aurora Trophy & Geoff Lees Trophy*	17	N/A
Historic Formula 3*	17	+42%
Classic Clubmans	13	N/A
80s Production Car Challenge*	5	N/A
CLUB AVERAGE	22	-12%

Note All figures only apply to UK rounds and include series that had at least four race events *Shared a grid with another series at one or more rounds, but figures are based on each series individually **Split over two or more different grids

Haig Griffiths Trophy for 1950s drum-braked cars already attracting "phenomenal interest". Its series for more modern cars – the Geoff Lees Trophy and 80s Production Car Challenge – have yet to take off, but Dee-Crowne feels they still have an important role to play and will carry on investing in them.

Castle Combe Racing Club

One of the advantages of being a single-venue organiser is that the majority of your competitors live fairly locally to the circuit. And that helped the Castle Combe Racing Club to be one of the first clubs to get their 2021 campaign under way. There may have been no spectators, but that initial Easter Monday fixture, held while overnight stays still were not permitted, attracted some of the best entries for the club all year.

"We certainly bounced back in 2021," says CCRC chairman Ken Davies. "The strength of our own series surprised us to a certain extent – there was a strong appetite to go racing again."

Davies picks out the Formula Ford series as being particularly strong. Its average entries continued at the impressive level they reached last year – far higher than they had been in previous seasons. "The quality of the racing was top class," he adds. "Not just in competitive terms

but in clean, hard driving terms. We've got some pretty good indigenous competitors at Castle Combe, such as Felix Fisher and Luke Cooper, but we had Oliver White [2020 Walter Hayes winner] and Ben Mitchell [Historic FF1600 ace] this year, and a full supporting cast in the classes. Those additions upped the ante and add gravitas to the championship."

The club's Saloons series also picked up after last year's restrictions prevented sponsors and families from attending, but it was the GT category that suffered. After a strong 19 cars at the opener, average grids dropped to 14. Davies says ways of boosting that championship – along with the other CCRC series – will be explored at a series of forums held as Autosport went to press.

"I think the GT one is the most difficult to sell and we've got to make our regulations as broad-brush as possible," he says.



GRID SIZES

SERIES	2021 AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 2020
Combe Hot Hatch	31	-6%
Combe Formula Ford 1600	22	0%
Combe Saloons	20	+18%
Combe GT	14	-22%
CLUB AVERAGE	22	-4%

Vintage Sports-Car Club

Of all the clubs in this feature, you could argue that the Vintage Sports-Car Club was worst affected by the pandemic last year. It held a single circuit racing event, at Mallory Park, but was back up to four fixtures in 2021. Yet, despite “worry” about some of the club’s racers being of an older demographic, they were out in force and it was a successful season.

It began with a strong start at Silverstone in mid-April. “Silverstone was really well-supported despite the fact there were no spectators,” says club secretary Tania Brown. “We were reasonably confident it would be [good] because of the support we had at Mallory the year before. We have a network of coordinators and the message coming through was people were going to turn out for it.”

And they certainly did. Several of the grids featured just below or above 30 cars – an impressive feat given the age of the machinery involved. The VSCC does not have any official categories, instead running standalone races, so entries cannot be directly compared to previous years, but the numbers involved were still impressive. They did dip a little at Oulton Park, with the exception of the Light Car race that attracted a magnificent 37 entries, while the Mallory finale created a “bit of a headache” as it was oversubscribed.

Brown believes the individuality of the cars ensures their enduring appeal. “The wonderful thing about vintage cars, even a standard road-going Austin 7, is they have bags of personality,” she says.

The club also has a strong focus on attracting the next generation of members to ensure that the cars continue racing. “We have our youth race at Mallory and give a 50% discount on membership and reduced entry fees,” adds Brown.

She says the VSCC tries to make its meetings “as attractive as possible”, and has taken the decision to allow post-war road-going sportscars to formally compete for the first time next year. The club may have ‘vintage’ in its name, but it is still looking at new ideas as it continues to evolve.



Alongside the main players, there is a host of smaller clubs that also organise series, and these enjoyed contrasting fortunes over the past 12 months.

It was a particularly tricky period for the Aston Martin Owners Club. A new partnership with the British Racing & Sports Car Club got off to an encouraging start at Donington Park in May, before entries dried up and races were cancelled. Nevertheless, AMOC remains committed to organising events next season and turning its fortunes around.

“We don’t really know what happened this year,” admits competitions director Peter Snowdon. “There just appeared to be no appetite for it. We’re conducting a review and I’m talking to all sorts of people saying, ‘What do we do?’ The likelihood is we put on one big event and will place our series elsewhere, going down a similar route as the Bentley Drivers Club.”

Elsewhere, it was a successful season

for Equipe Classic Racing. Alongside its popular categories, its Three-Hour Relay race was again well-subscribed, and it continued to innovate by running a unique super sprint format for its finale, ahead of organising its own events next season.

The Historic Racing Drivers Club opted to wait until coronavirus restrictions eased further before beginning its campaign and it enjoyed some impressive grids, particularly with the Jack Sears Trophy. Meanwhile, the Classic and Modern Motorsport Club continued to evolve and grow, the new Ecurie Classic Racing division operating under its wing.

Other success stories were the Mini Miglias and Se7ens of the Mini 7 Racing Club, as well as the Track Attack Race Club, while the Civic Cup flourished after switching to Club Time Attack operation. But the F3 Cup moving to Monoposto Racing Club control failed to boost its fortunes, averaging a tiny six cars.

GRID SIZES

SERIES	2021 AVERAGE	CHANGE FROM 2020
Equipe GTS**	41	N/A
Monoposto**	41	+11%
HRDC Jack Sears Trophy	33	N/A
Track Attack	31	+15%
Mini Se7en	29	+32%
Northern Saloons & Sports Cars	29	+16%
Snetterton Saloons	29	N/A
Equipe Libre**	27	N/A
Civic Cup	26	+63%
Mini Miglia	26	+37%
Equipe Pre-'63 & 50s**	25	N/A
HRDC Allstars*	25	N/A
CMMCS Super Saloons & Tin Tops	24	N/A
Morgan Challenge	24	-8%
Ecurie Classic Racing	23	N/A
CMMCS Intermarque Silhouettes	20	N/A
HRDC Classic Alfa Challenge*	19	N/A
Welsh Sports & Saloons	19	N/A
500 Owners Association Formula 3	18	N/A
Pirelli Ferrari Formula Classic	17	-6%
Touring Car Trophy & TCR UK & VW Cup	16	0%
F3 Cup	6	-33%

Note All figures only include series that had at least four race events *Shared a grid with another series at one or more rounds, but figures are based on each series individually **Split over two or more different grids

Formula E's fly-on-the-wall docuseries is free to view for a binge-watch on YouTube

AND THE AWARD GOES TO...

DOCUMENTARY SERIES FORMULA E: UNPLUGGED

"I'd like to thank genius director Stan Stanworth, tireless director of photography Miles Massey and assistant producer Lloyd Purnell. Without their guidance and the enduring support of my parents and best pal Oakley – my 13-year-old black Labrador – I wouldn't be here to collect the BAFTA for Most Promising Newcomer."

What do you think? That's what I've got down so far for my acceptance speech after appearing as a talking head interviewee and exposition provider in the new documentary series *Formula E: Unplugged*. It's my onscreen debut, as long as you don't count being an indecipherable pixel on *Match of the Day*.

For this starring reason, it'd be wrong of Autosport to do a paint-by-numbers review of this 15-part in-house Formula E production on the 2021 season, which tries to replicate the success of Netflix's Formula 1-based *Drive to Survive*. But with no acting chops whatsoever, perhaps it's worth critiquing the performances of some of my fellow cast and crew members.

Sebastien Buemi Best Actor

The Academy Award goes to the 2015-16 champion for his lead performance in the fourth of the 15-minute episodes, entitled 'Redemption'. He reaches the top echelons of method acting by delivering a compelling portrayal of himself. He captures the fiery temperament and competitive determination.

The standout scene arrives with a post-race engineering debrief at the Rome E-Prix. After Nissan e.dams team-mate Oliver Rowland refuses to let Buemi past, the Swiss barks across the row of data screens that he's "not here to be a number two" before ushering the camera operator out of the garage. It's one of the standout moments of the whole series, which is available to watch on the Formula E YouTube channel.



BINGHAM/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Alejandro Agag Not nominated

Unfortunately, it's a less nuanced performance from the championship's co-creator. While he's ordinarily an intensively captivating and suave interviewee, there's something that doesn't sit right about his rant in episode eight, 'Behind the Visor'.

The Spaniard was, by all accounts, apoplectic when Porsche was disqualified out of its maiden series race win in Puebla for wrongly declared race tyres. But Autosport holds some scepticism about the take that makes it into the final cut here. For one, Agag just so happens to be mic-ed up for a heated exchange that's supposed to be off the cuff. What doesn't sell the performance either is the occasional fourth wall-breaking look down the camera lens, as if to make sure the rage is being committed to film.

Nyck de Vries Best Director

As much as series architect Stanworth has crafted an accomplished show and gains a worthy nomination, the award goes to the 2021 drivers' champion. In episode six, 'Lights to Flag', de Vries takes charge of the camera to film a point-of-view tour around the Mercedes garage.

The audience gets to meet a good chunk of his



GALLOWAY/MOTORSPORT IMAGES



engineers, mechanics and the team's PR gurus to gain a better understanding of their roles within the title-winning squad and to see de Vries's friendly rapport with all of them. The sometimes shaky camera work is gritty and compelling. Watch out, Martin Scorsese.

Valencia E-Prix The Razzie

Cars running out of energy en masse and failing to make the finish of the first race in Spain marked the nadir of a turbulent 2021 Formula E campaign. In the hours after the chequered flag, the FIA dragged popular reigning champion Antonio Felix da Costa under the bus by trying to place the blame on him. The championship then released an awkward statement declaring the series was proving itself as a technical test bed, despite the damage that had been inflicted to public perception.

'Unplugged' is billed as "honest and unfiltered". But it skirts around the controversy. It might have been unrealistic for episode five, 'Energy Management', to act as a way for officials to hold their hands up and recognise that mistakes were made. But perhaps more of an effort could have been given to explain why the events unfolded as they did to rectify the initial clumsy communication.

Alexander Sims Worst Costume

This category might otherwise be known as 'biggest overshare of the series'. For a while, da Costa was nailed on to take the prize for revealing that he was engaged on the throne when he received a call from the Portuguese president to congratulate him on his title-winning success of 2019-20.

But Sims snatches that away, incidentally with the help of former team-mate da Costa. The DS Techeetah driver kindly reveals that Sims perceives clothing to be very much optional. To everyone's horror, the Briton – who has up to this point come across brilliantly with his account of having imposter syndrome as he competes among a well-decorated field – confirms this to be true.

MATT KEW

FINISHING STRAIGHT



autosport.com/podcast



Lewis Hamilton beat Max Verstappen in a fierce battle to win the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix and go level on points in the Formula 1 standings ahead of the title decider this weekend in Abu Dhabi. Jess McFadyen (Director of Digital Strategy, Motorsport Network) takes on hosting duties and is joined by Luke Smith (Autosport F1 reporter) and Haydn Cobb (Autosport.com editor) for the latest edition of the Autosport Podcast. **Go to autosport.com/podcast**



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HIGHLIGHT OF THE WEEK



THE SEARCH FOR BRITAIN'S BEST RISING STAR

The four finalists for the 2021 Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award all feature in a round-up video from the two-day event at Silverstone. Ollie Bearman, Jonny Edgar, Louis Foster and Zak O'Sullivan showcased their abilities last month ahead of the winner being announced at the Autosport Awards in February, and you can take a look at how they did. **Go to uk.motorsport.tv**

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Abu Dhabi GP
Formula 1 World Championship
Round 22/22

Yas Marina, UAE
12 December
TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sun 1255
TV Highlights Sky Sports F1, Sun 1700, Channel 4, Sun 1730

FIA Formula 2
Round 8/8
Yas Marina, UAE
11-12 December
TV Live Sky Sports F1, Sat 0810, Sat 1440, Sun 0850



FROM THE ARCHIVE

Ayrton Senna had never driven the Monza circuit before he first ventured out in practice for the 1985 Italian Grand Prix, but by the end of qualifying his Lotus 97T was in

pole position, 0.146 seconds ahead of the Williams FW10 of Keke Rosberg. Senna held his advantage off the line, before Rosberg pushed past at the first turn, the Brazilian's attempts to defend also letting Rosberg's

team-mate Nigel Mansell past. Both Williamses were later forced to retire due to engine failure, and the race was won by the McLaren MP4/2B of Alain Prost ahead of Nelson Piquet's Brabham BT54, with Senna third.

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NEXT WEEK

AUTOSPORT'S



DRIVERS OF 2021

WE PICK THE BEST PERFORMERS FROM
A DRAMATIC MOTORSPORT SEASON

PLUS

F1 2021 TITLE SHOWDOWN

Will it be Max or Lewis on top in Abu Dhabi?

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